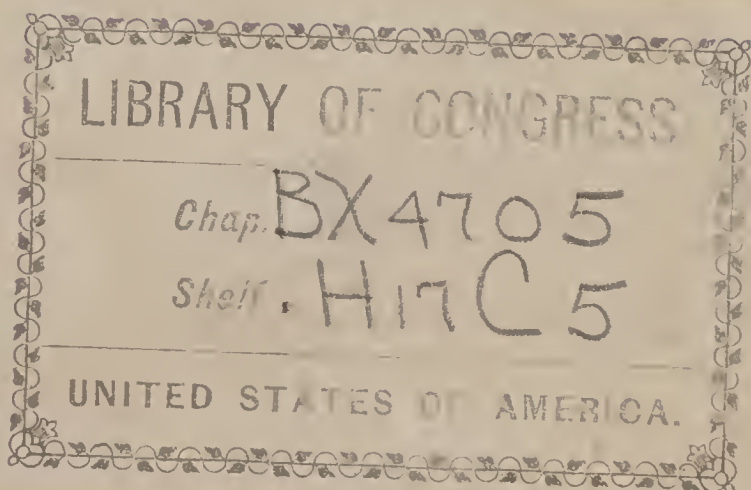


LIFE OF  
FATHER BERNARD

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THE *Life of*  
LIFE OF FATHER BERNARD, *Joseph*  
MISSIONARY PRIEST

OF THE  
Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

THE  
APOSTOLATE OF A REDEMPTORIST.

BY  
P. CLAESSENS,  
*Canon of the Metropolitan Church of Mechlin.*

"Seest thou that faith did co-operate with his works; and by works faith was made perfect?"—ST. JAMES ii. 22.

*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE author of this sketch begs the kind indulgence of his readers for introducing at the outset an incident of his early ecclesiastical career. While pursuing in the Catholic university the studies which he had commenced in the seminary, it was his custom to devote a part of his academic vacation to visiting hamlets and villages, particularly those in which he hoped to collect some details interesting to him as a priest, and to become acquainted with the religious life of the inhabitants of the country.

In the summer of 1841 he accompanied an ecclesiastic of Northern Brabant to the ancient barony of Bréda, and while there enjoyed the kind hospitality of the venerable prelate who then governed the Diocese of Bréda in the capacity of vicar-apostolic.

Mgr. Van Hooydonck delighted to speak of the excellent spirit of the inhabitants of those parts, who remained profoundly Catholic, notwithstanding the harassing war of persecution which Calvinistic intolerance had waged against them from the time of William the Silent until the reign of good King Louis. "And this traditional spirit of our fathers," he added, "is reanimated to-day by the zeal of my diocesan clergy, and by the apostolic labors of the sons of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori.

"Not many years ago the religious habit was entirely unknown here, and even our secular priests met with many difficulties. It is now no longer so. Thanks to a beginning of justice on the part of the existing government, we enjoy sufficient freedom of worship, at least in the interior of our churches, and we are, moreover, allowed to save souls by means of retreats and regular missions, which are conducted by the fathers.

"The Redemptorists have accomplished for us incalculable good; they are, I assure you, the fishers of men, priests of holy skill in drawing the multitude to the altar, masters perfect in

the art of healing souls in the tribunal of penance, and guiding them in the path to heaven, *'not in loftiness of speech, but in the showing of the Spirit and of power.'* ”

The following day the Bishop went to a populous parish in the deanery of Berg-op-Zoom, to preside at the closing of a mission which had lasted for ten days, and he wished to procure us the pleasure of witnessing this touching solemnity.

Happy at receiving the invitation, we repaired to the place, and, having made the acquaintance of the pastor through Mgr. Van Hooydonck, we were seated in the sanctuary of the church; which we found thronged with the faithful devoutly reciting the rosary.

The prayers being concluded, a priest, still in the prime of life, ascended the pulpit. He was a religious, armed with his mission cross, whose mere aspect impressed me deeply. It was the same father whose portrait I had seen in many Brabant families, and of whom they related many marvellous things. That majestic bearing, that intellectual and manly countenance, that noble brow, that burning look which he cast on the

assembly, as if measuring the field of an impending battle, that solemn sign of the cross, and the sacred words, "Behold, thou art made whole; go and sin no more," followed by an address, or rather a long discourse, delivered in a vibrating, clear, and singularly sympathetic voice, with manly gesticulation and expressive action, which placed before us a living representation of the celebrated Pères Bridaine and Beauregard—all so deeply impressed me that more than thirty years have not been able to obliterate the remembrance of the scene. I shared the emotion of the people, and thanked God for having given such power of word and work to one of his servants. The discourse itself was not lofty, "*Non in sublimitate sermonis,*" but was truly apostolic. I have never heard another popular preacher rising to such a height of eloquence and speaking so well to the point.

This priest, whom I heard for the first time in the church of Steenberg, and whom I had the happiness to hear afterwards on many occasions, both in humble country churches and in the more magnificent ones of large cities, was none other than the compatriot, the old schoolmate, and in-

timate friend of my professor, Dr. John Theodore Beelen; it was Bernard Joseph Hafkenscheid, better known as Father Bernard, of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

To form an idea of Father Bernard's eloquence, it would be necessary to be present at his sermons. It is said that eloquence proceeds from the heart; as for him, the heart was love of God, of the Church, and of souls. Scarcely had he pronounced his text, when all eyes were fixed on him, his hearers listening to him because they understood him. He commenced calmly, but by degrees grew animated, and, on coming to the main point of his subject, he abandoned himself without restraint to the impassioned flights of his zeal and of his gifted soul. It was the Gospel, it was the Fathers, Jesus Christ, the Church, that spoke by his mouth. The sublime truths of faith, the eternal maxims, assumed, as it were, a living form in energetic and manly language, in expressions sometimes incorrect and unpolished, but always plain, and occasionally bordering on the familiar. His style was marked by certain peculiarities which did not always accord with the rules of oratory, and which

would not always please, if in sacred eloquence there were question of any other art than that of saving souls, in which he certainly excelled. At times silence and gesture alone spoke more forcibly than words. The orator knew the most hidden recesses of the human heart, and seemed by his penetrating look to read one's inmost thoughts. Sometimes he terrified the conscience by portraying the everlasting punishments that divine justice had in reserve for the hardened sinner; again he inspired confidence and hope by describing the divine mercies and the joys of heaven. He was not satisfied with abstract or vague ideas, but, insisting on the truths of Christianity, he taught the practice of virtue without any modification or exaggeration. He attacked with vehemence some particular vice, as blasphemy, intemperance, and similar scandals, and was so skilful in inspiring a horror for sin that even those who came to the church through curiosity, or with evil dispositions, were frequently seized with remorse, and felt the first operations of grace. As soon as he saw his audience in tears (and it is said he possessed an especial talent to effect this when

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he wished) he grew more animated, he redoubled his efforts, for he knew that the moment of victory was at hand. He no longer made use of threats or of gloomy pictures, but poured the balm of hope into hearts which he had just wounded; and when he had made the desired impression upon his hearers, he descended from the pulpit to receive in the confessional the confidence of the penitent, and to rescue his soul from perdition.

Father Bernard was occupied for more than thirty years in the work of the holy missions. He travelled through Holland, his native country; through Belgium, his country by adoption; a part of Germany, England, Ireland, and North America, *everywhere doing good*, announcing the Word of God with rare lustre and with a success which was almost miraculous.

His apostolic voice resounded in the two worlds. Everywhere it conquered hearts, penetrated into the depths of the conscience, bent before the cross the brow of the learned, evangelized the poor and the ignorant; and when his beautiful soul entered the heavenly portals, it undoubtedly met there a host of pro-

digal children whom he, by the grace of God, had brought back to their Father's house.

Father Bernard always left a lasting impression wherever he appeared. A powerful and faithful instrument in the hands of the Divine Redeemer of man, he was a most indefatigable soldier of the Church, under the peaceful banner of Saint Alphonsus.

The memory of this extraordinary man has always affected me. After his death I commenced to collect the interesting details of his life and of his apostolic labors. I can affirm with truth that the present biography, in absence of any other merit, has at least that of perfect accuracy. By giving this life to the devout public, I consider myself as doing something for the edification of the faithful, and for the glory of our holy mother the Church.

Justice compels me to inform the reader that I have availed myself of a Netherland pamphlet of 35 pages 8vo, *Korte Levensschets van den Ew. P. Bernard*, by an anonymous writer, published some time ago by H. Bogaerts, Bois-le-Duc and Amsterdam. It is the work of a nephew of the deceased, and the author had at his

disposal the correspondence of his venerable uncle.\*

Several Redemptorist fathers, whose humility prevents me from mentioning their names, have supplied me with authentic information; others have had the kindness to revise my imperfect work and to supply my deficiencies. May they deign to receive the assurance of my respectful gratitude.

In conclusion, I request the reader to bear in mind that these pages are not intended as a panegyric; they contain but a feeble sketch of the labors which marked a too short but glorious career. It remains for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer to perfect the portrait of its illustrious son. It above all others knows what he was on earth, and what he has done to cultivate the field of our Heavenly Father.

\* We hope it is not indiscreet to say that this excellent biographical notice is due to the pen of Abbé Lans, at present a professor in the petit séminaire of Hageveld. May he one day favor us with a complete life !



# LIFE OF FATHER BERNARD,

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## CHAPTER I.

### BERNARD'S CHILDHOOD.

HAPPY the man who has been reared under the eye of a pious and loving mother; under the strict discipline of a virtuous father. This united authority exercises over the child an irresistible influence which often decides his future career; and as the sun penetrates all nature by its rays and vivifying power, so do Christian parents infuse into the hearts of their children the celestial germs which will one day be developed by the grace of the Most High.

Our future Redemptorist missionary enjoyed this inestimable happiness.

Michael Hafkenscheid, descended from a respectable family, distinguished for its inviolable attachment to the faith in the heart of a Pro-

testant country, was born in the village of Ulft, in the province of Guelderland.

While still young he went to Amsterdam to engage in commercial pursuits, and in 1801 he espoused Catherine Aléide Weber, a native of that city, a pious Catholic lady of ancient lineage, who was in all respects worthy of him. The fortune of the newly-married couple was not very considerable, but they soon experienced the truth of the promise of our Divine Master: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."\* Providence abundantly rewarded their honesty in business, and blessed them with the goods of this world.

They also became the happy parents of three sons and as many daughters. Full of holy zeal for their religious duties, they carefully watched over the education of their children, and formed them to the practice of virtue by their teachings and example. In their old age they had the happiness to see their children, not only corresponding to their desires, but even far surpassing their most ardent hopes.

\* Matt. vi. 33.

On the 12th of December, 1807, was born in Amsterdam their second son—he for whom God had destined a distinguished place in the family of St. Alphonsus. This child of grace was baptized in the parish church known as that of “Faith, Hope, and Charity,” and received the name of Bernard Joseph.\*

Bernard Joseph grew to be an amiable child, remarkably bright and cheerful; but he always

\* The Catholic worship was secretly practised in Holland until the beginning of the present century. The churches in commercial cities were designated by names such as those which were usually given to warehouses and taverns. At Amsterdam the Catholic churches bore the titles of Pool, het Haantje, de Papegaai, het Duijfe, de Poost-Hoorn, de Krijtberg, de Zaaier, etc., instead of those of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Anne, St. Nicholas, etc. The first church, which bore the exterior appearance of a religious edifice, was that of Geloof, Hoop en Liefde (Faith, Hope, and Charity). The government employed every means in its power to prevent the building of this church, but Mr. Hafkenscheid overcame every obstacle. His son Anthony, a brother of Bernard, was the founder of the first religious community that was established in Amsterdam since the time of the so-called Reformation. Mr. Anthony Hafkenscheid is now president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in that city. Pope Pius IX. has rewarded his devotedness to the church by creating him a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

assumed an air of thoughtfulness whenever his mother commenced to give him instructions in faith or endeavored to form his young heart to piety. Without him his little comrades seemed not to enjoy themselves; without him their games possessed neither animation nor attraction. But this natural gayety changed to recollection whenever he was permitted to accompany his parents to church or join them in the family devotions. He was then no longer recognized as the jovial Bernard. He edified and delighted all who witnessed his respect and recollection in the sacred edifice.

It is unnecessary to speak of his submission to his parents; he bore them the most tender affection, and availed himself of every opportunity to prove his love. A knowledge of this filial love, which increased with years, may give us a faint idea of the painful sacrifice he was required to make, at a later period, in leaving them for Italy, or when he retired to a convent in Vienna, or, finally, when he was called upon to bid farewell to Europe, and enter upon the work of the American mission.

When a man by his superior greatness has

once attracted our attention, we feel interested in the most trifling details of his childhood. The favorite amusement of little Bernard was, as it is commonly termed, "to play priest." If it be true that this is, as has been frequently observed in pious families, a sign of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state, young Hafkenschcid may be cited as a proof of it. Scarcely a day passed in which he was not seen, in his youthful simplicity, representing the functions of the holy priesthood. When he celebrated Mass or gave Benediction in his chapel, he required his brothers and sisters to be present, and would not permit them either to speak or laugh. The service was frequently preceded or followed by a *sermon*, as if the youthful *cure* had a presentiment of his vocation to a missionary life. On one occasion he preached on the holy name of Jesus; of this sermon his family preserved a precious remembrance. His relatives still recall the love for Jesus which shone forth in every word of the little preacher. Those who heard him were deeply affected, and his parents were moved even to tears.

Bernard was gifted with a clear, sweet voice,

x His high Mass was celebrated all  
over the country. — in the U.S. I remember it well

x which he loved to devote to the service of the church. Great was the joy he manifested when permitted to sing solos in the choir. When only ten years of age, he took lessons in vocal and instrumental music, in which he made rapid progress. This accomplishment, which, in the beginning, was but a mere recreation for him, was afterwards, during his priestly career, frequently devoted to singing the praises of the Most High, thus adding to the splendor of divine worship.

His piety grew more solid as the time of his first communion approached. The counsels of his pious mother, the prayers which she offered, together with his own, joined to the instruction of the venerable curé, Van Der Lugt, served as the immediate preparation for this great act of his life. The child understood beyond his years the greatness of the grace he was about to receive. One day, when he was thought to be engaged with his little companions in play, his mother, astonished at his remaining away from home much longer than usual, went in search of him; but he was not to be found, and no one knew what had become of him. With the anxiety of a mother, she sought him every-

where, until he was at length discovered in his little room. Bernard was kneeling before a crucifix, engaged in fervent prayer, with his arms extended in the form of a cross, preparing to approach the tribunal of penance.

On the eve of the great day, the child, according to the custom of pious families, came to ask the blessing of his excellent parents, and to beg their pardon for any sorrow which he might have caused them. On the 14th of February, 1820, his soul was nourished for the first time with the Bread of Angels. This first communion, made with such good dispositions by so innocent a child, was the consecration of the destiny that awaited him.

## CHAPTER II.

### BERNARD'S EDUCATION AT HAGEVELD.

FOR a generous soul, and one truly devoted to God, the things of this world and its transitory joys have but little attraction. Bernard was not made for them; all his aspirations tended towards the holy ministry, and more than once he expressed his desire to be permitted to follow his inclinations. His parents were far from opposing his vocation; they had already consulted the worthy curé of the parish to which they belonged. By his advice it was decided that the pupil should be sent to an institution which laid just claim to the confidence of all good Catholics. On the 30th of September, 1820, Bernard, then in his thirteenth year, left the paternal roof, his face bathed in tears, but with a heart overflowing with happiness, and entered the college, or *petit séminaire*, of Hageveld, situated at Velzen, not far from Harlem.\*

\* The *petit séminaire*, which still retains the name of Hageveld, is at present situated in the village of Voorhout, near Leyden, in the Diocese of Harlem.

The Hageveld Institute, the result of a wise civil liberty, was founded in 1817 by three distinguished priests of Holland—the Baron of Wijckerslooth\* and Messrs. Van Niel and Van Bommel. The professors of Hageveld devoted their talents and energies to the forming of the army of young clerics which was placed under their charge. Unremittingly devoted to their labors, they never lost sight of the thought which had inspired them. The education of youth was the object of their watchings and of their persevering efforts. Here it was that Religion, the queen of souls, ruled all things by her efficacious influence, while piety diffused salutary rays of light and life into both mind and heart.

Brilliant success could not fail to crown labors undertaken in so noble a cause and pursued with such disinterested zeal. This explains the at-

\* Corneille Louis, Baron of Wijckerslooth, afterwards Bishop of Curium *in partibus*, died November 10, 1851. The *Revue Catholique* of Louvain, t. ix. p. 534, gives a notice of this eminent prelate, who rendered immense service to the Catholics of the Low Countries and to their colonies in the Indies.

tachment of the young pupils to this well-directed institution—an attachment which they ever preserved. It was particularly dear to those who attended it while under the direction of its first superior, M. Corneille Richard Antoine Van Bommel.\*

The director of the petit séminaire of Hageveld soon perceived that he had received a student remarkable in every respect. Young Hafkenscheid, on his part, applied himself with unabated ardor to his studies, in order to be the better able to realize the expectations of his beloved parents and to mature the excellent talents with which God had gifted him. His first care was to increase in wisdom and in grace before God and men; his next was to make progress in science. Bernard joined great pleasantness of character to solid piety, which possessed something very attractive, and gentlemanly deportment to great simplicity of manners. The

\* It is well known that this eminent priest was raised, in 1829, to the episcopal see of Liège, and in 1834 became one of the founders of the University of Louvain. He died a holy death at Liège, April 7, 1852, leaving to Belgium the remembrance of his exalted virtues and great works.

only fault discovered in him was an extreme vivacity; but it must be said that against this he combated all his life.

Destined, like his fellow-student and competitor, John Theodore Beelon, to attain scientific celebrity, he raised himself above the ordinary level. Like him, he was always at the head of his class; like him, he gained the esteem and affection of all. Without a show of humility or a desire to seek applause, he never understood how he could consider himself in any respect above his confrères; he also avoided the least manifestation of having surpassed them in anything whatever.

The penetrating eye of M. Van Bommel soon discovered the qualities of Bernard Joseph Hafkenschied; he saw in him not only virtue, but brilliant talents, sound judgment, and an energetic character. On this account he always took the liveliest interest in him. Several years later, when he heard that his dear humanist and philosopher of Hageveld had enlisted in the army of St. Alphonsus, he was not in the least astonished. "I always thought," he said, "that a mere village or a single city

would be too small a theatre for a soul so great."

It is a fact worthy of note that the diocese of Mgr. Van Bommel was the first to witness the salutary effects of Bernard's zeal.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BERNARD ENTERS THE ROMAN COLLEGE.

BERNARD had completed his preparatory studies and the first course of philosophy at Hageveld, when the fatal decree of 1825 was published. King William I. suppressed the colleges and Latin free-schools, replacing them by the "Collegium Philosophicum," designed for the education of young Catholics who were destined for holy orders.

No aspirant could be admitted into the episcopal seminaries unless he had previously made his preparatory studies in this college, which became so sadly renowned. This was a violent infringement on the rights of the church. All the Catholics of the kingdom raised their voices against measures so grievous and so unconstitutional. In vain did the Holy See address earnest protestations to the royal court. The Batavian government disregarded them. The "Collegium Philosophicum" was opened the same year at Louvain, and all Catholic colleges were arbi-

trarily suppressed. The Hageveld Institute yielded to the general proscription. Masters and pupils received orders to separate. M. Tets van Goudriaan, Governor of Northern Holland and the friend of the superior, M. Van Bommel, was, against his inclinations, the executor of the royal will.\*

Hafkenscheid and Beelen were compelled to return to their homes; they were determined not to enter the "Collegium Philosophicum," which was condemned by all true Catholics. They did not, however, interrupt their studies. Having a knowledge of the Greek and Latin, they wished also to acquire that of the Hebrew tongue, which could not fail to be useful to them. They took lessons of a Jew in Amsterdam. Having completed the course of elementary philosophy,

\* Professor Mathias Siegenbeck, in a public letter addressed, in 1840, to M. Groen Van Prinsterer, dared to calumniate the Catholic institutions which were arbitrarily closed in 1825. Mgr. Van Bommel, then Bishop of Liége, made him a dignified reply in a letter addressed to the Protestant publicist. Among the many men distinguished in the higher orders of society who were educated at the petit séminaire of Hageveld, he named Hafkenscheid, Beelen, Broere, etc.

they devoted themselves to the study of theology under the direction of Abbé Bogaerts, one of their former professors at Hageveld.

On the 18th of June, 1827, the Concordat was concluded between Pope Leo XII. and the government of William I.; but the Calvinistic government found reasons to delay the execution of the treaty, and did not allow the reopening of the seminaries. In awaiting the dawn of happier days for the Catholic population, our young men resolved to follow the example of some Hollanders and Belgians who went to seek in a foreign land the sacred science which their own government had denied them. On the 28th of September, 1828, they bade farewell to their respective families, and directed their steps towards the capital of Catholicity.

In after years they delighted to relate how, by making short journeys, they visited the large cities which lay on their route; how, with pipe in mouth, staff in hand, and with joyful hearts, they travelled over the mountains of Switzerland, and contemplated with delight the grandeur of uncultivated nature. On Mont Cenis they courageously mounted a summit, covered with snow

and ice, and, when they beheld the beautiful country of Italy, they exclaimed with enthusiasm, "*Italiam! Italiam!*" Arriving in a diligence within three leagues of Rome, they stepped out of the conveyance, which travelled too slowly for their desires, and performed the rest of the journey on foot. They entered the City of the Seven Hills November 20, and went in search of their companions, who had arrived in Rome before them. Their happiness was now at its height. "Nothing," wrote Hafkenscheid to his beloved parents—"nothing can be compared to the joy that we felt in breathing the fragrance of Rome, and this joy, I dare say, was holy. The thought that I have come here to taste, in the mother city, that which my own country has refused me, deeply penetrates me, and renders my happiness so pure that I believe I can abandon myself to it without reserve."

Rome, the asylum of the persecuted, interested herself from the beginning in the welfare of the proscribed seminarians who had come from the Netherlands. Pope Leo XII. deigned to take them under his protection, and appointed

a distinguished priest to give them a cordial reception.

The day following their arrival Hafkenscheid and Beelen were received into the Gregorian University, better known as the Roman College. The ties of pure and sincere friendship which had united the two students of Amsterdam naturally became stronger. Like David and Jonathan, they were of one heart and one soul. "Beelen was never seen without Hafkenscheid, Hafkenscheid never without Beelen." It was thus that Bernard wrote to his parents. United in recreation and in visiting the Roman monuments, they were not less so in their studies and devotions. These inseparable companions had the same end in view: they desired to become learned and exemplary priests in order that they might thereby become worthy laborers in the vineyard of our Heavenly Father.

Beelen made the Holy Scriptures and the Oriental languages his favorite studies; his friend preferred scholastic theology. He acquired a thorough knowledge of Saint Thomas of Aquin, the prince of theologians. "From morning till night," he says in a letter to his

parents, "the *Summa* lies open on my table. The Angelic Doctor is not easily understood, but daily intercourse with him has already given me an insight into his meaning, and I often entertain myself with Saint Thomas till midnight. You cannot imagine how agreeable is his conversation. Every word contains a treasure of deep thought. I never leave this 'Angel' without having learned from him something new and interesting." Some hours of the holidays were generally devoted to reading the works of De Lamennais, whose glory was not yet tarnished by his revolt against the decisions of the Church. Hafkenscheid also took some relaxation in his scientific reflections, sometimes in Tasso's "Jerusalem Delivered," sometimes in topographical researches, or in the history of the great city. "I am sure," he says in a letter to his parents, "that no more useful pastime can be found here; no society, not even that of the inhabitants of the city, is more agreeable. . . . My professors, my books, my confrères, natives or Hollanders, are the most agreeable and instructive society that I could or should have. Patient and continual application to study is the only

means one has to advance and to see his efforts crowned with success. . . . Living in this manner, I hope to conduct myself well, and to form myself according to the spirit of the state which I hope one day to embrace."

It is not astonishing that a piety so firm, a zeal so persevering, and a mode of life so well regulated and in all respects so exemplary, should have gained for Hafkenscheid and Beelen the especial affection of their masters; and, whenever they mentioned the best students of the Roman College, the name of our young levite and that of his excellent friend always ranked first.

These earnest labors, blessed by the Holy Spirit, were abundantly rewarded. At the close of the first scholastic year Hafkenscheid obtained the silver medal awarded as the first premium in dogmatic theology, while Beelen took the first prize in Sacred Scripture. Without being elated by their success, they were not the less happy. Above all, they rejoiced to be able to give to their beloved parents this testimony of filial gratitude for all the privations they had un-

dergone. All the students of Holland then at Rome rejoiced at the victory of their countrymen, and at a private feast, where music, song, and the national pipe were not forgotten, they gave full vent to the joy of their hearts. Divine Providence, which ordereth all things powerfully and sweetly, gave them an unexpected consolation. In March, 1829, they heard that their former director at Hageveld was to be preconized Bishop of Liége. Their joy was still greater when shortly afterwards it was announced to them that the religious affairs of the Low Countries had taken a favorable turn. A royal decree of June 20, 1829, rendered optional the attendance at the "Collegium Philosophicum" by the Catholic young men who intended to devote themselves to study in the episcopal seminaries. By another decree, dated October 2, the king declared that the bishops could devote themselves immediately to the organization of their respective seminaries, and to admit into them the young men who had made their preliminary studies outside the kingdom. Thus satisfaction was given to the Catholic clergy of the Netherlands. We cannot refrain

from reproducing some passages of Bernard's correspondence :

“ Our esteemed director, whose memory is engraven on our hearts, who has already rendered valuable services to the church, will now render her services still more valuable ; his rare qualities, so long hidden within the walls of Hageveld, will now shine forth in all their brilliancy, and he will receive from the entire Netherland church the exalted esteem which those who have known him intimately have always felt for him. . . . The reopening of the Institute of Hageveld, always so dear to our hearts ; the return of the young students who had been dispersed here and there, to their former home ; this the new source of blessings to the church of the Netherlands, are so many events which have excited, even in Rome, the most unexpected and the most sincere joy. Yes, from the bottom of our hearts we participate in the joy of the Catholics of our country. In these recent events they have received a new proof that patience and resignation always triumph over the enemies of the church, and that those who patiently support earthly trials will infallibly draw down upon themselves the benedictions of

heaven. May a lasting feeling of gratitude confirm in all hearts this great grace which heaven has bestowed on our brethren of the Netherlands."

The renown of the merits and virtues of the two friends preceded them into their own country. In June, 1830, after the reopening of the seminaries, in accordance with the decrees of June and October, 1829, the Archpriest of Holland thought of recalling them. He wished to appoint Bernard professor of philosophy at Hageveld, and Theodore Beelen professor of theology in the Seminary of Warmond. Ready to obey their superior if he should insist, they respectfully asked his permission to complete their course in Rome, and the Archpriest acquiesced without difficulty to this just demand. The future clearly manifested that the finger of God was here. The pulpit, and not the professor's chair, was the most suitable place for the activity of Hafkenscheid. He already felt in the depths of his soul a secret desire of which we will hereafter speak. The events which took place in Belgium in September, 1830, are too well known to be referred to in this biography.

## CHAPTER IV.

### BERNARD IS ORDAINED PRIEST, AND RECEIVES THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY.

ON Saturday, in the Ember-week of December, 1829, Bernard received minor orders, and on Holy Saturday, 1830, he was promoted to the order of sub-diaconate. "Could I have believed," he wrote on this occasion, "that the choice of my state of life would have caused me so much interior happiness? Truly, it is too great. Why cannot I sufficiently thank heaven for granting me this signal favor?"

At the close of the scholastic year, he received the degree of bachelor in theology, and obtained three medals, the first prizes in moral and dogmatic theology and in Hebrew.

The desire to commence an active life and to labor for the salvation of souls grew daily stronger in Bernard's soul. The young theologian was anxious to terminate his studies and to undergo his examination for his license and for the degree of doctor of theology. He be-

came licentiate at the close of the third year (1831), and was made doctor shortly after his ordination. He received the order of deacon on Holy Saturday, 1831. A letter written to his friend Broere, who had been appointed professor of philosophy at Hageveld,\* testifies to the exalted idea he had formed of the dignity which awaited him: "Another step, my dear friend, and I shall be a priest! I am continually occupied with this thought, and I hope to be suitably prepared for the great day. From this moment I claim a share in your prayers, especially in your mementos during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. When I reflect on what I have been and on what I am to-day, I sincerely confess that I tremble at the mere thought of my elevation to a dignity of which I see the responsibility. But the will of God, if I am not mistaken, has called me to this sublime state, and it must be accomplished. I endeavor, as far as is in my power, to

\* M. Corneille Broere, Canon of Harlem and domestic prelate of His Holiness, was born in Amsterdam in 1803, and died in the Seminary of Warmond, December, 1860. He was a philosopher, theologian, a talented painter, and a poet of genius.

purify my intentions and to renew my spirit, which should be that of a good and true priest. Nine days before Lent I made for this purpose the spiritual exercises under the direction of the fathers of the Society of Jesus. May God crown my feeble efforts with the best success! I have great confidence in the prayers of my family and in those of my friends and acquaintances; for the rest, I place all my interests in the hands of God and in those of his holy Mother. It is now two years and a half since I left Holland, and, God be praised, I feel the most complete indifference as to my destination! I do not trouble myself to know in what place or in what position I shall one day labor. My family awaits my return at the end of the fourth year; if it is to be so, I will say 'fiat!' Should it be otherwise, I shall not be the less contented. It always makes me happy to learn that one or the other of my friends has received an appointment. I hope one day to follow them, and, although I burn with the desire to be useful to my neighbor, I cannot neglect the opportunities which I now have to enrich my mind and heart."

And, in fact, if Mr. Hafkenscheid's mind was

developed by private study, his heart became perfectly sacerdotal under the spiritual guidance of the Jesuit Fathers of the Roman College. His confrères were unanimous in their esteem of him on account of his virtues. He had learned from his parents to love the poor of Jesus Christ, and attributed to his little alms the greatest graces which God bestowed upon him. During Lent his collation in the evening consisted of a piece of dry bread with some salt. In his walks he never failed to conduct his friends to some sanctuary, to prostrate themselves before the Blessed Sacrament or to assist at Benediction. The edifying example which the Holy City gave, the splendor of its religious solemnities, its reminiscences of the early ages of Christianity, and even the revolutionary storm which broke out in the Pontifical States at the accession of Gregory XVI., revived in his soul that firm confidence in the triumph of the Church, that holy indignation against the persecutors of the spouse of Christ, that ardent thirst for souls, that indefatigable zeal for the conversion of sinners, and that courage in all trials, which were so many characteristic traits of his apostolic career.

Even in Rome his oratorical talents began to display themselves. He assiduously studied the great orators, who were heard at the religious services presented by the Pope at the time of the attempted insurrection. He knew how to appreciate them according to their just value—a proof of which is the following passage, taken from one of his letters: “Here, in sermons, are not heard the soft murmurs of a limpid stream, fragrant flowers are not gathered; but the truths of the Gospel are clothed in chaste and appropriate language, and inculcated with soul-stirring eloquence. Happy, thrice happy Netherlands, if orators such as these announced the Gospel to thee!”

Little did he then think that he would one day hold the first rank among orators of this class. On the 17th of March, the feast of Saint Patrick, the patron of the country which at a later period he went to evangelize, Bernard Joseph Hafkenscheid was raised to the sacred dignity of the priesthood. On the 19th of March, the feast of Saint Joseph, he had the happiness to offer to God, for the first time, the holy sacrifice of the Mass. He spent this day in re-

treat and continual prayer. The following month he admirably sustained his theses for the doctorate. His professors conferred on him the degree of doctor, accompanied by the following testimony : \*

“ I, the undersigned, declare that the Rev. Mr. Bernard Joseph Hafkenscheid, son of Michael, a native of Amsterdam, has pursued for about four years, beginning with the 8th of November, 1828, the study of dogmatic theology in the Roman College of the Society of Jesus. He devoted himself to the studies of moral theology, Holy Scripture, and of ecclesiastical history for two years, and for one year to the study of the Hebrew language. During this time he gave increasing proofs of such diligent application, and made such remarkable progress, that but few students could be compared to him. As regards piety, religion, and modesty, he was always a model, and merited the highest encomiums. He took the first prize at the solemn distribution of premiums at the close of the scholastic year. In 1830 he received the degree of bachelor ; in 1831 he became licentiate ; and finally, in April, 1832,

\* See Appendix A.

he was, by unanimous suffrages, raised to the degree of doctor of divinity.

Given at the Roman College of the Society of Jesus, April 23, 1832.

“J. B. DOSSI,  
“Rector of the Roman College.”

A

## CHAPTER V.

### RELIGIOUS VOCATION—HE ENTERS THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

THIS good news had already reached Amsterdam. Father Bernard's parents longed for the moment when they should embrace their beloved son, who had been absent for four long years; and they promised themselves the happiness to see him engaged in the exercise of parochial duties. But God had other designs with his faithful servant. After mature deliberation and ardent prayer, and having asked the advice of his spiritual director, Bernard Joseph resolved to unite the perfection of the religious life to the dignity of the priesthood by entering the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. I have consulted on this subject a religious who enjoyed his friendship and for a long time shared his labors. I here insert a copy of the letter which he addressed to me:

“Our future confrère saw brilliant prospects

open before him; but he sacrificed all to secure his salvation. A pulpit in Holland, as well as a position in Rome, had been offered to him; but he felt himself called to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. He could not explain the interior attraction which he felt for Saint Alphonsus rather than for Saint Ignatius. He loved the Society of Jesus, which labors for the greater glory of God; he also loved scientific pursuits. In order to enter our dear Congregation, he must devote himself entirely to the apostolate; he must be entirely detached from his country and the companions of his studies; he must leave his parents, whom he loved with all his heart.

“He could not, however, resist the voice of God, which left him no repose. It was while kneeling in the Church of Saint Andrea della Valle, and shedding an abundance of tears, that he took the final resolution to knock for admission at the convent-door of the Redemptorist Fathers.

“At that time our fathers did not possess, in the Eternal City, their large establishment on the Esquiline Hill known as the Villa Caserta,

which, under Pius IX., became the residence of the superior-general. They had at Rome only a small convent attached to the Church of Santa Maria in Monterone. Father Mantone resided there, quite unknown to the city, with three companions, and without being engaged in the work of the holy missions. He was charged with the duties of procurator-general.

“When Mr. Hafkenschaid manifested the desire to be admitted as a novice, Father Mantone received him with an air of indifference, giving him but little hope of success. He told him to reflect at leisure, and, in any case, not to form any resolution before he had taken his degree of doctor of divinity; ‘for,’ he added, ‘you will not be permitted in our Congregation to receive university degrees.’

“Having received the degree of doctor, Mr. Hafkenschaid renewed his request. This time he received a more definite reply. But God sent him another trial.

“‘Since you are a native of Holland,’ said Father Mantone to him, ‘you can easily learn the German language. You would do better to apply to the Redemptorists in Vienna; your

apostolic life will be more useful there. We are expecting two fathers soon to arrive from beyond the Alps; you will have an opportunity of speaking to them, and to make arrangements, if possible, with regard to what step you shall take.'

"Mr. Hafkenscheid did not suffer himself to be discouraged.

"In a few days Rev. Father Czech, Rector of the house at Fribourg, in Switzerland, arrived in Rome, in company with Rev. Father Frederic de Held, of the community in Vienna. They repaired together to the chapter which was to be held at Nocera for the election of a new superior-general, who was to replace Rev. Father Celestine Maria Cocle, who had been appointed confessor to the King of Naples, and was raised to the archiepiscopal dignity.

"Our friend had an interview with Father Czech. The latter, perceiving that the young priest had a true vocation, and would be of service in the northern countries, promised to plead his cause with the Most Rev. Father Passerat, vicar-general of the cisalpine pro-

vinces of our Congregation.\* In the meantime, the postulant was to return to his family to await a reply.

“Bernard Joseph immediately communicated to his parents the desire with which heaven had inspired him, doubting not that they would be happy to learn of his vocation. The news deeply afflicted his father; but this good man knew too well his duties as a Christian to offer any resistance to such a resolution. ‘He would willingly submit,’ he replied, ‘to the will of God, provided it would be clearly manifested.’ ”

Bernard, full of his project, left Rome, May 7, 1832, to return to his native country. Arriving at Liège, his first care was to ask the episcopal benediction of his former director. Mgr. Van Bommel received him with open arms, and, knowing the merit of his dear student of Hageveld, confidentially spoke to him of a theo-

\* Father Passerat succeeded, in 1820, the Venerable Father Clement Maria Hoffbauer, who had introduced the Congregation into Austria, and had entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, in Rome, during the lifetime of Saint Alphonsus. See Appendix E.

logical professorship in the Catholic university which the Belgian episcopacy intended to found at Mechlin. The proposal was tempting; but Bernard's vocation was already decided. On hearing that Mr. Hafkenscheid wished to become a member of the family of St. Alphonsus de Liguori, the bishop made the further discovery that the conversion of sinners by means of missions was the special end which the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer had in view. This was, for the zealous prelate, a discovery that might be termed providential.

"Go, my son," he said to him; "but you must absolutely return, for I wish to introduce this Congregation into my diocese."

It is well known that Mgr. Van Bommel generously assisted the Redemptorists to establish themselves in Belgium, and that he showed them the affection of a father. The particular esteem that he bore them, and the powerful protection with which he favored them at Liége, Saint Trond, and Wittem, may be attributed to the influence of Father Bernard.

In July, Bernard found himself in the bosom of his family and relatives, whose joy and gra-

titude to God knew no bounds. He celebrated solemn High Mass in the humble church in which he had received the grace of regeneration and made his first communion.

Professor Corneille Broere sang, in Dutch verse, the happiness of his friend and of his pious family: "The sun, in traversing its orbit for the fourth time, has restored the friend whom the voice of heaven had called from his country. He left his family in tears, and, behold, he returns a priest of the Most High, educated in the Eternal City! O ye who are prostrate with me before this holy altar, witnesses to-day of the Eucharistic sacrifice which he offers, pray that the grace of the Most High may ever enlighten his path and conduct him to heaven!" This prayer of friendship was heard.

It was at Amsterdam that the young priest received the so-much-desired letter which the rector of the house at Fribourg had promised him in Rome. It reads as follows:

"SIR: Rev. Father Czech, the rector of the house of our Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer at Fribourg, has informed me of your desire to consecrate yourself to God in our holy

Congregation. According to the information which he has given me of your reverence, I judge, as far as human infirmity is capable, that your desire is inspired by the Holy Ghost, and that you have a true vocation. It is, then, my duty to give you the means to follow it. Thus, sir, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I receive you as a candidate, and you may repair to Vienna, in Austria, to make your novitiate. You know the spirit of our Congregation. Nevertheless, I will repeat to you that obedience is, as in all religious orders, the principal as well as the most difficult point. Perfect indifference is required with regard to all kinds of employment in the holy ministry, and also concerning all opinions that do not pertain to faith.\* Recommend to our Lord the step that you are about to take. Commending you to our Lord Jesus Christ and to his blessed Mother, in the hope of embracing you soon, I have the honor to be, sir, your very devoted servant,

“JOSEPH PASSERAT,

“Vicar-General C.SS.R.”

\* See Appendix B for an explanation of this passage.

The joy of the postulant on receiving this letter of admission may be imagined. He preserved it until death as one of the most precious remembrances of his life. It recalled not only an extraordinary grace which he had received from God, but also the extraordinary virtues of him who had written it. After two months' sojourn beneath the paternal roof the day of separation arrived. It was for him a bitter trial to leave those whom he so fondly loved, but he had studied these words of Jesus Christ: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." His parents were no longer anxious about his future; they only desired that, previous to his departure, he would give them the first-fruits of his apostolate in the church at Ulft, which was his father's native village. Bernard wrote and carefully committed to memory his first sermon. On the appointed day he ascended the pulpit and preached on the advantages of adversity. He proved that adversity was, in the sight of God, a salutary trial and a sign of predestination. The merit of adversity should be a consolation for the pious parents who were about to be

separated from their son, the object of their affection.

Our Roman doctor arrived at Vienna during the last days of October, 1832. Most Rev. Father Passerat sent him to the convent at Weinhaus, one of the suburbs of the Austrian capital. It was there that Bernard was clothed in the livery of St. Alphonsus, December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and commenced his apprenticeship of the interior life in prayer and meditation.

Father Bernard had the habit of writing in his Manual the resolutions which he made during his retreats. He wrote as follows on his reception of the habit: "Like a good Redemptorist, I must frequently recall to mind this touching solemnity. In blessing the habit which I wear the priest said, 'Bless, O Lord Jesus Christ! this livery of thy Congregation, that with it thy servant, our brother, may be clad with thee, who art the most beautiful model of all perfection.' When the priest placed the habit on my shoulders, he said to me, 'Invest thyself, my son, with our Lord Jesus Christ, and always bear in thy body the mortifications of Jesus.' I then

said that I was resolved to give myself entirely to God, and to strive to imitate with all my strength the most holy life of my Divine Redeemer. I must also recall the words addressed to me when I received the crucifix: 'Receive, my son, the image of thy Divine Master and crucified Redeemer, who has suffered for thee, and has given himself for thee; place it as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm. Amen.' "

The novice of Weinhaus did not fail during the first months of his novitiate to address to his parents frequent expressions of his filial attachment, and to assure them of the ineffable delights which he enjoyed. "Never," said he, "could I have imagined that my sacrifice, which was not very great, would have met with so rich a reward. Assured of my vocation to the religious state, I experience the most holy joy of heart. Ah! pray with me, and ask my friends to pray, that I may correspond to all these graces; that I may ever preserve them; and that I may become a missionary according to the heart of God." In another letter we find this touching exclamation: "Blessed Weinhaus, I

could never have thought that thou didst contain so many treasures! The four years that I passed in Rome are less dear to my soul than the four months spent within thy solitary walls."

We would never finish did we attempt to enumerate all the expressions of happiness with which Bernard's letters abound. This feeling of happiness becomes greater when he speaks of the love of Jesus and Mary; when he consoles his friends who have met with a loss, or when afflicted with sickness, by describing to them the sufferings of the Saviour of man and the merits attached to afflictions. When he manifests his unlimited confidence in prayer—above all, in the holy rosary—he then becomes eloquent without wishing it, and the ardor of his words betray the emotions of his soul.

Fathers Madlener and Doll, trained in the school of Saint Alphonsus by the Venerable Clement Maria Hoffbauer, were successively his masters in the spiritual life. They testified that during the course of his novitiate he gave his confrères an example of every virtue, particularly of obedience and regularity, of humility

and the spirit of mortification. He loved to repeat these words of Saint Alphonsus: "He is an unworthy son of our Congregation to whom the least rule is not of the highest importance." He was, in a certain sense, covetous of humiliations. It sometimes happened that the master of novices, in order to try him, asked him questions in the catechism, to which Father Hafkenscheid replied with the modesty and simplicity of a child—he who, after sustaining the most brilliant theses, had received the degree of doctor of theology!

The excellent Father Hugues, who was his companion in the novitiate, relates the following traits of his character:

"Fathers Madlener and Doll have frequently spoken to me with intense admiration of Father Bernard's virtues, and particularly of his humility and self-abnegation. As to myself, who had been but recently converted to the Catholic faith, and had not as yet received any theological instruction, I could not sufficiently admire his goodness and his charity towards me. I may also add that he was for all of us an admirable model of religious perfection. Among

the novices he was the only priest; the others were nearly all young Austrians, trained in the corrupt gymnasiums of the empire, and imbued with maxims that scarcely accorded with Roman orthodoxy; hence but very few of them were admitted to profession. We may easily understand how much Father Bernard, who had completed his studies at the Roman College, suffered in the depths of his soul in hearing his confrères express opinions which, to say the least, were very strange; but he always remained calm, always full of sweetness and charity. Although he wrote German correctly, he frequently committed faults in speaking it, which caused much mirth to our young Germans; yet he comported himself towards them as though he had remarked nothing whatever, and lost neither his self-possession nor forbearance."

Since Father Bernard had already been raised to the priesthood before entering the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and gave every sign of a true vocation, his time of probation was shortened. He took his religious vows on the 17th of October, 1833, at the hands of the

Most Rev. Father Passerat. He requested his superior, as a favor, to be allowed to remain for some time in the novitiate, that he might acquire more solid virtue and the spirit of the institute. The same year he left Weinhaus for Saint Trond, in company with Father Hugues, who was then neither a priest nor a professed member of the Congregation, to whom he nevertheless humbly submitted.

Father Bernard had now attained the age of twenty-six years. He was the first member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer who was a native of Holland. We will soon see him at work.

It gives me great pleasure to state here that his former fellow-student and intimate friend, Doctor John Theodore Beelen, was appointed by Mgr. Van Bommel to teach theology in the Episcopal Seminary of Liége (1833). In 1835 the Episcopacy of Belgium confided to him the professorship of Holy Scripture and of the Oriental languages in the Catholic University of Louvain. It belongs not to me to speak of the services which this eminent man has rendered to science

and to the Church during his long professional career. I may be permitted to express here my gratitude for the affection with which he has honored me since I had the happiness of attending his lectures.

## CHAPTER VI.

FATHER BERNARD'S PROFESSORSHIP AT SAINT  
TROND — HIS APOSTOLIC CAREER IN BEL-  
GIUM.

THE first Redemptorists who came to Belgium were sent from Switzerland, and some, perhaps, from Austria, by the Most Rev. Father Passerat, the year after the Belgian Revolution. Having dwelt for a short time in a house known as the Solitude, situated at Rumillies, near Tournay, they took up their residence in 1833, in the interior of the city, during the episcopacy of Mgr. Delplancq.\* At this period Mgr. Van Bommel entered into negotiations with the Very Rev. Father Passerat to obtain a colony of Redemptorist missionaries for his extensive diocese.

Fathers de Held and Pilat established a com-

\* The Solitude was a country-house belonging to the Seminary of Tournay. The noble families Robians and Casier gave the fathers a mansion in Tournay.

munity of the Congregation at Liège in the month of March, 1833, and another at Saint-Trond in the following May. In January, 1836, the Redemptorists took possession of the house of Wittem, near Galoppe, in that part of Limburg which was annexed to Holland in 1842 \* In 1841 they opened, under the auspices of Cardinal Sterckx, Archbishop of Mechlin, a house adjoining the little church of Saint Mary Magdalen at Brussels.

The Convent of Saint Trond served as a house of studies from 1833 until they obtained possession of the convent at Wittem.

The Redemptorists commenced their apostolate in Belgium by a simple novena, beginning with the first of November, 1833. In December of the same year they commenced a course of missions in the respective parishes of Gulpen and Wittem.

In the course of the following year regular missions were given by Father de Held to the inhabitants of Fauquemont, Montzen, Heerlen Thimister, Verviers, etc.† Thus the diocese of

\* See Appendix C.

† *Journal Hist. et Littéraire de M. Kersten*, vol. i. p. 328.

Mgr. Van Bommel received the first-fruits of the ministry of the children of Saint Alphonsus.

Father Bernard was appointed to teach theology to the students of the Congregation at Saint Trond. The following confidential lines prove that he had to overcome a natural repugnance in entering upon the career of a professor: "God does all things for our good; it remains for us to accomplish his holy will. Hence I have no other desire. I seek no other consolation or happiness than to fulfil the holy will of God. For myself and for others I wish but a filial submission to what God wills. By acting in this manner we will accomplish the greatest work that man can possibly perform in this world. From the moment we begin to realize in ourselves the divine will we commence to lead here below the life of the angels and of the blessed, who find all their happiness in heaven in the accomplishment of the divine will, in adoring God, and in praising him for ever."

On another occasion he wrote to his brother the following words: "'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'—this is our daily prayer; it is also the daily thought of our

hearts. Our Heavenly Father alone knows what is beneficial for us. Let us hide ourselves with confidence in the bosom of his Divine Providence." And again: "I live happily, provided the will of God be accomplished in me. I beg you to ask our dear Lord and his glorious and holy Mother to grant me this signal favor."

Father Bernard was not long engaged in the duties of professor of theology. At the end of one year he entered the list, and, to use his own expression, "obtained a rank in the army." The solitude of Saint Trond was "the arsenal where he prepared his cannon and shot." \*

He was permitted to use his first weapons in a slight skirmish which took place in the parish of Thimister, four leagues from Liège.

The mission of Thimister, the first which had been given in the Walloon section of the Diocese of Liège, was opened August 29, 1834, with the co-operation of the vicar-general of

\* Father Bernard resided at the convent in Liège from 1835 to 1842.

the institute, the Most Rev. Father Passerat. According to custom, it lasted ten days. Father Bernard and his confrères labored with indefatigable zeal, and by their united efforts brought forth fruits of salvation. The number of those who sought to be reconciled to God during the course of this mission was so great that it was necessary to ask for a reinforcement of confessors. Twelve fathers were occupied in the confessional from an early hour in the morning till late at night.\* This skirmish was the beginning of that continued war against sin and impiety in which Father Bernard displayed his natural energy and his superhuman strength for over thirty years. His life was spent in fighting the battles of the Lord. It was not an uncommon thing for him, particularly in the first years of his missionary labors, to meet with violent opposition. In one place the authorities interfered, under pretext of the law, but in contempt of all justice, to prevent the mission; at another the evil-minded instigated the people against the “hypocritical monks, the disturbers of the public peace from a foreign country”; they spoke

\* *Journal de M Kersten*, vol. i. p. 361.

of troubles and seditions; the corrupt press disseminated atrocious calumnies; the liberalism of the streets made use of irony and sarcasm. In a word, hell left nothing untried to accomplish its work; but it was on such occasions that Father Bernard seemed to redouble his efforts. Braving intimidations, raillery, and obstacles of all kinds, he engaged in action, and came off victorious, bearing away the spoils of those who were most obstinately infuriated against him. This happened in the great battle of Verviers, of which we will now speak.\*

The work of the mission of Verviers was commenced October 20, 1834, in the midst of unforeseen difficulties. I must, however, remark, to the honor of the inhabitants, that these disturbances afflicted all good people. Calumny unrelentingly attacked the missionaries, even when they were triumphant. Strangers to the passions which agitated their enemies, they returned neither complaints nor criminations, and thus proved that the mission

\* *Journal de M. Kersten*, vol. i. p. 419.

was the work of God, of peace and reconciliation. All the sinister attempts of their adversaries had no other result than to constrain them to render homage to a religion the solemn exercises of which attracted the people, and gave tears of repentance and peace of soul to the immense crowd that attended them. As a proof of this it will suffice to enumerate the principal exercises of the mission, and the fruits of grace produced in those who assisted without hostile intentions.

From the beginning of the mission the faith of the inhabitants of Verviers was manifested by the sacrifices which they made. Daily, at half-past five o'clock in the morning, the two parochial churches in the city were thronged with the faithful, whom the voice of grace called at that early hour to hear the word of salvation. The attendance at the instructions was not less numerous than at the sermon during High Mass. But it was, above all, the sermon in the evening, preached by Father Bernard, that showed the marvellous effects produced in sincere hearts by the grace of the Most High.

A person who attended this mission has preserved the following account of the subjects of the sermons and meditations: 1. The Invitation; 2. Mortal Sin; 3. Salvation; 4. The Small Number of the Elect; 5. Mercy of God; 6. Human Respect; 7. Death; 8. Death of the Sinner; 9. Death of the Just; 10. The Particular Judgment; 11. Hell; 12. Abuse of Grace; 13. Blasphemy; 14. Confession; 15. The Happiness of a Virtuous Soul; 16. Proximate Occasion of Sin; 17. Prayer; 18. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin; 19. The Blessed Sacrament; 20. Unworthy Communion, followed by the act of reparation; 21. The General Judgment; 22. Heaven; 23. Education of Children; 24. Perseverance; 25. Salutary Effects of the Cross.

On the seventh day the fathers commenced to hear confessions. The concourse of people that surrounded the confessional was very great; there were seen persons of all ranks, ages, and conditions in life. The operations of grace and the acts of sincere repentance, which were the consolations of those who took part in this laborious ministry, will be revealed by our

Lord on the last day for the glory of His divine mercies.

The mission of Verviers was terminated, as is customary, by the erection of the cross—a touching ceremony, which hell had in vain attempted to prevent. Never was there seen a larger procession in the city, or greater recollection in a crowd of more than twelve thousand persons. Sighs of contrition and repeated cries of “Long live the cross!” arose from this vast concourse of people at the sight of the sign of salvation. The recollected attitude of the people was another refutation of the calumnies uttered by the anti-Christian party that spoke only of the disturbance of the public peace.

Father Bernard, in one of his letters, alludes to the calumnies propagated by the press against the missionaries.

“I can assure you,” he says, “we have had, thanks be to God, our share of sufferings. But the humble period of our Congregation has passed; henceforth we shall be no longer unknown. Verviers has raised us to an eminent position. We will hold on, and, with God’s grace, will courageously pursue our course.”

I cannot omit relating a circumstance which reflects the religious soul of our missionary hero.

Father Bernard, having resided only in Holland, Vienna, and Rome, at this time spoke French but imperfectly. The malicious journals of Verviers did not fail to expose him to ridicule, and to exaggerate the faults of language that escaped him.\* Being appointed by Rev. Father Passerat to perform the acts of Reparation of Honor to the Blessed Sacrament, and of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin, Father Bernard threw himself on his knees, and begged him to take pity on his incapacity, and to release him from a duty which might be productive of no good. The venerable superior made him this severe reply:

“My son, your self-love causes you to speak thus.”

\* These journalists were even less sparing in their criticisms on Father Ludwig, who was an Alsatian. “The fastidious ones of the earth,” says Bossuet (*Panegyrique de Saint Paul*) “cannot understand how those who are ignorant of the art of speaking well can, with an unpolished form of speech and an accent which betrays the foreigner, succeed in calling the multitude to the practice of virtue.”

Father Bernard, without any further remark, ascended the pulpit; and the tears of the immense concourse were the recompense of his humility.

We will now say a few words on the mission which was given during the months of March and April, 1835, in the parish of Louveigné, situated between Verviers and Liége.

Father Ludwig was superior of the mission, but Father Bernard assisted him with his usual apostolic zeal, and also by his musical talents. At the solemn planting of the cross he ascended a platform that had been erected in the churchyard, and spoke for an hour and a half, moving many to tears of love and contrition. At the first communion of the children that took place during the course of the mission, his melodious voice was heard singing hymns in French, as he accompanied himself on the organ.\*

“We will courageously pursue our course.” Father Bernard kept his word. From the time of the memorable mission at Verviers until his first departure for America scarcely a month

\* *Journal de M. Kersten*. vol. ii, p. 99.

passed in which he was not engaged in the work of the missions. Looking over the account of his apostolic labors, we find that his missions, his retreats to seminarians and to religious communities, his Lenten sermons, his instructions, etc., followed so closely on one another that the interval between these exercises did not exceed the time necessary to go from one place to the other. If in the missions he succeeded to the extreme of his desires, it was generally at the cost of great sacrifices. A priest, and, above all, a missionary, who has zeal for the conquest of souls, must expect to meet enemies and to see the passions excited against him. Our Divine Saviour warned his disciples of this: "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember my words that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

What was the nature of these attacks? They were frequently the expressions of a pitiably mean rationalism and of a jealous incredulity; they were the outbursts of the hatred of some ultra-liberal men in public office. To preach

missions, they said, is to disturb the conscience, to arouse fanaticism, to cause confusion and public disorder. It is needless to reply to such accusations. Eighteen hundred years ago the Jews accused, before the tribunal of Pilate, *the first Missionary of the world* of having stirred up the people, of having rendered them fanatical by the preaching of his Gospel (Luke xxiii. 5). "We see," said Father Victor Dechamps, in 1846, "that the adversaries of missions have made no progress since the time of Pilate, and that they have for them, or rather against them, but the terrible argument of the cause judged on Calvary.\* Let them remember these words of Jesus Christ: 'For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprovèd.'"

The concourse of people was often so great that the church could not contain them. Consequently, the fathers preached from a platform erected in the open air. This occurred at Sittard, a small city of Limburg. The crowd was so great that not only the great square was

\* *Saint Vincent et les Misérables*, c. vi.

filled, but the windows and even the roofs of houses were crowded with listeners. On this mission Father Bernard preached in German for the first time; besides the short instructions, he delivered a sermon on scandal, the effects of which were very wonderful. At the closing sermon, which preceded the Papal benediction, and which was preached by the superior of the mission, there were assembled from twenty-five to thirty thousand persons, although the population of the city consisted only of four thousand souls. It was a magnificent sight to see these thousands of human beings, affected to tears, raising their suppliant hands towards heaven. The content and happiness of these pious people were expressed in the evening by a grand illumination and exclamations of joy and delight.\*

In the months of May and June of the same year still greater wonders were witnessed at Tongres. The narrow limits of this sketch do not permit us to enter upon the description of them.† I cannot, however, omit to say that

\* *Journal Hist. de M. Kersten*, vol. ii. p. 48.

† *Ibid.*, p. 210.

the remembrance of the spiritual favors with which the ministry of the Congregation blessed the inhabitants of Tongres remained engraven on their hearts, and not satisfied with a renewal of the mission in 1838, they desired to hear the Redemptorists a third time in a Novena to the Blessed Virgin, celebrated in August, 1841. The principal part of this evangelical work was assigned to Father Bernard. Morning and evening he preached before the best families of the city on the sacraments, faith, the causes of unbelief, the authority of the Church, and on the reading of bad journals, romances, etc. He exposed the absurdity of those free-thinkers who disregarded the authority of the Church established on divine and immovable foundations, while they crouch at the feet of miserable journalists and writers of immoral books. In these discourses, says one who was present, he surpassed himself in eloquence; magistrates and members of the bar, together with the populace, admired, more than the beauty of his delivery, the force of his logic, the connection and clearness of his arguments. During this novena the sermons were nearly all of a dogmatic

character, without losing anything of the perspicuity and simplicity of language which the holy founder of the Redemptorists so forcibly recommended to his sons. This was Father Bernard's custom whenever he preached in cities on other occasions than those of missions. He was, however, never happy except when he drew the faithful to the confessional and to the holy table. And this holy joy was given him in 1841, in the ancient cities of Saint Maternus and Saint Servatius.\*

The mission of Tilff, which was called by Father Bernard the "famous mission," opened March 24, 1838, under circumstances altogether unfavorable. Before the arrival of the missionaries of the Convent of Liége, the *liberal* government notified the curé of an absolutely unconstitutional decree, which prohibited the planting of the cross in any part of the commune, and also all out-door preaching, without the written permission of the civil authorities. The letter charged the curé to inform the missionaries of Articles 201 et seq. of the Penal Code. The fathers were nevertheless well received by

\* *Journal de Kersten*, vol. iii. p. 297.

the people. The exercises were conducted on the 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th, without the least sign of trouble. On the 30th another decree of four articles was posted on the door of the church, the first of which ran as follows: "All out-door gatherings of more than five persons are forbidden during the sojourn of the missionaries in the commune."

The two decrees were annulled March 31, by the Baron Van den Steen, governor of the province. In consequence of this the Bishop of Liège ordered the missionaries to follow their entire course in preaching out of doors, if necessary, as well as in the planting of the cross. Irreligious liberalism did not acknowledge the defeat,

Father Guersouille and Abbé Bremans, secretary to the bishop, were violently conducted beyond the limits of the commune. Soldiers, rural guards, and some dozen clamorous persons took possession of the sanctuary, under pretext that the missionaries were strangers without passports. Father Bernard was several times obliged to show himself at the window and bless the kneeling multitude, who, but for his interven-

tion, would have attacked the besiegers. The following day two fathers escaped from their prison and repaired to the church, preferring to be captives in the house of God than to remain inactive in the parish. Father Bernard in particular exposed himself to the ignoble clamorings and to the outrages of a band of young men from Liége. Finally, the government of Leopold I. took the missionaries under its especial protection. A royal decree of April 3 guaranteed freedom of worship, and on the 6th of April the cross could be planted in the church-yard, notwithstanding the clamors of the enemies of religion. The mission of Tilff may be considered one of the most successful of those in which Father Bernard took part.

The events which we have briefly related are not the only painful reminiscences of the mission of Tilff. The cross was cut down and overthrown on the night of the 23d of April, 1838. A few days after the perpetration of this outrage, the authorities of the commune handed in a bill to the tribunal of justice at Liége, claiming church-yard property; but as delay was necessary, the suit turned to the con-

fusion of impiety. The court of Liége declared, by a sentence of May 4, 1839, the claim of the commune of Tilff unfounded, and condemned the authorities of Tilff to pay the expenses of the lawsuit which they had commenced against ecclesiastical authority.\*

Let us pass over these sacrilegious proceedings to return to the subject of this biography. We will mention a circumstance that occurred in a Walloon parish, and which shows Father Bernard's never-failing presence of mind. The Redemptorists, being conducted in procession to the village by the clergy and the pious faithful, found a mob formed against them. Having entered the church, Father Bernard boldly ascended the pulpit, notwithstanding the threats of the multitude. He remained at first perfectly tranquil, slowly casting his looks over the agitated multitude, that was regardless of the holy place. "Unless you remain quiet," he said at last in his firm voice, "I will not tell you who we are." The power of his voice having calmed the multitude, the orator con

\* *Journal de Kersten*, vol. v. pp. 39 and 246; also, vol. vi. pp. 41 and 84.

tinued: "They say that we are, etc.; that we are, etc." And the foolish calumnies which they had spread were passed in review amid the sneers of the disturbers. But as the father proceeded in his discourse their derision gave place to amicable feelings, and they listened with attentiveness. "This," he added, "is my first point. You now know what we are and what we are not; to tell you what we have come to do is my second point." He then explained the object of the mission, announced the order of the public exercises, and explained the conditions necessary to hear with fruit the voice of God. After this singular sermon the success of the mission was no longer doubtful.

It was not Father Bernard's custom to refute the calumnies with which the enemies of religion filled their journals in order to foil the apostolic work. He knew the people of Belgium too well to suppose that the opposition with which he frequently met in the Walloon department came from their hearts. He triumphed over all these obstacles by the power of patience and of prayer, of talent and presence of mind. One of the most laborious and at the same time

most consoling missions given by Father Bernard was that which was opened on the Epiphany, 1839, at Comblain-au-Pont, a village situated on the hills at the confluence of the Ourthe and the Amblève. Let us hear how he himself relates what sacrifices the poor mountaineers imposed upon themselves when touched by the grace of God. "When I saw," he says, "these good people, without distinction of age or condition, climbing the hills two or three times a day, despite the cold winds, to await, morning and evening, their turn at the confessional, and so benumbed with cold that they were obliged to go from time to time to the fire in the sacristy to prevent their feet from freezing; when I saw that on certain days they could not ascend to the top of the hill without the assistance of a rope which I ordered to be extended; when I saw old men of seventy and eighty years led to the church by their children, then I understood these words of our Divine Saviour: 'The poor are evangelized.' Grace made the inhabitants of Comblain-au-Pont a happy people. It was another proof that 'the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.' But I was

also required to make a slight sacrifice. Four days before the close of the mission I made a false step; my foot slipped while I was descending a small staircase, and I fell on my back. For three days I was obliged to keep my bed, and in this position I heard the confessions of the men. The impossibility of assisting my confrères at the close of the exercises would have caused me more affliction than the bodily pain, had I not known that this accident did not happen without the will or permission of God. The day after the close of the mission I went away limping, but interiorly rejoicing that I had not only been able to labor, but also to suffer something for the love of God. If you wish to ask God to preserve me from another fall, I will permit you to do so; but if I can save some unfortunate sinner from falling into sin, I will willingly fall a second and even a third time."

Father Bernard, having recovered from his injury, resumed his labors. In speaking of the first mission which followed his recovery he writes: "In preaching the word of God and in hearing confessions I have gained more strength than I had lost by my illness." It was said of

him at the convent: "When Father Bernard is sick, it is only necessary to send him on a mission; to make him sweat profusely is sufficient to restore him completely." "Very true," said he; "I have tried the experiment. In returning from Antheit\* I was entirely cured. I felt my health restored after the famous mission of Tilff."

\* Antheit is about a league distant from Huy.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FATHER BERNARD'S APOSTOLATE IN HOLLAND.

**I**N November, 1840, Father Bernard, assisted by several of his confrères of Saint Trond and by some of the secular clergy, gave a mission at Maestricht which lasted two weeks. He preached there before persons belonging to all ranks of society ; soldiers were seen at the side of the villagers ; Jews and Protestants mingled with Catholics, all listening in the silence of religious attention. The missionary rejoiced at seeing the number of auditors daily increase, and thanked them for the eagerness with which they came to hear the teachings of religion.

“ You have listened to me with sympathy,” he said, “ as I have explained to you the sublime dogmas of our holy faith. These dogmas are the fructifying principles. I will now draw from them the practical conclusions, and I hope that

you will not fear to come to listen to them and conform your life to them."

These words were particularly addressed to the wealthy portion of the parish. The entire audience remained faithful. While the father dealt formidable blows, while he exposed the condition of sinners, questioned, threatened, terrified them, and still encouraged them with vehemence and mildness, grace visibly did its work, and soon the emotion of the multitude of six or seven thousand souls was at its height. They wept, sighed, and cries of repentance became so loud that the sonorous and penetrating voice of the preacher could scarcely be heard. The effect was particularly noticeable during the acts of Reparation, of Honor to the Blessed Sacrament, and of Consecration to the Mother of God, and at the close of the exercises. The concourse was so great that many were compelled to remain at the door, and others climbed to the windows of the church in order to hear the words of Father Bernard. Rarely has sacred eloquence been more efficacious. Returns to God were abundant, and often truly extraordinary. At their departure the fathers could

scarcely tear themselves from the arms of the grateful inhabitants, who followed them and overwhelmed them with benedictions.\*

During the years 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1844 the fathers were continually at work in various parishes of Northern Brabant and in Limburg.† Although frequently opposed by the intrigues of the enemies of religious liberty, the holy exercises everywhere produced consoling results. Considerable restitutions were often made; the poor and the working-classes became fervent Christians; persons of rank who had until then been noted for their indifference returned to the practice of religion. There exists on this subject sure information which the future historian of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer will not fail to record.

At the mission of Bois-le-duc, in 1843, Father Bernard had acquired such a reputation, even among the Protestants, that the lieutenant-general, Count of Limbourg-Stirum, military commandant of the province, came with his staff to visit and to present his compliments to

\* *Journal Hist. de M. Kersten*, vol. iii. p. 416.

† Appendixes C and D.

the humble religious. In December of the same year (1843) a mission was given at Margraten, which was called the *Model Mission*.

“The sermons,” says an account of that time, “were delivered by the best preachers of Wittem, at the head of whom was Father Bernard, who may be called the apostle of Holland, so great is his zeal for the salvation of souls.”\*

Knowing the simple piety of the good inhabitants of Margraten, the fathers followed there the order which is observed in Italy. It consisted in having general communions for the different classes of persons; the first day was appointed for the children, the following days for married women and widows, then for married men and widowers, and finally for the young unmarried people. At six o'clock Father Bernard gave an instruction suitable to the state of life of those who approached the holy table; the instruction was followed by the singing of the “Veni Creator” and the celebration of Mass. From the Offertory to the Communion the father recited the acts of the theological virtues, etc. At a sign given by the pastor the

\* *Journal Hist. de M. Kersten*, vol. xi. p. 42.

faithful approached the altar in the order observed by children at their first communion. What more touching than this simplicity! The Catholic religion alone can offer so beautiful a spectacle; there is no other that can incite the faithful to such acts of humility. The reader is not to expect here a complete account of the uninterrupted labors of our missionary. Every week, day, and hour had its work. The exercises having been concluded in the church, Father Bernard found his way to the workshops to carry to the laborers the words of grace and salvation. He heard the confessions of the sick and infirm at their houses; he went in search of sinners even into their own dwellings, and he frequently had the consolation of bringing these strayed sheep back to the fold. At other times he was less successful in these labors inspired by his zeal. This proved to be the case at a mission given at Bréda (July, 1842). He thought it his duty to seek an interview with General Baron Chassé, who had acquired a sad reputation in the Belgian Revolution,\* and led a retired but irre-

\* Baron Chassé, commander of the fortress of Antwerp, unmercifully bombarded that city in 1830.

ligious life in Bréda. The general received him with much politeness, but not without surprise ; he did not give him an opportunity to introduce his subject.

“Father,” he said to him, “you would have done well had you become a soldier.”

“And you, general,” replied Father Bernard, “would not have done wrong had you become one of us ; you could have rendered eminent service to the Church.”

The soldier did not appear to take offence at the compliment, but immediately changed the conversation. In parting the father affectionately pressed his hand, saying, with a significant look :

“General, the moment to leave this world will soon arrive ; I wish you a happy death.”

Chassé was much affected on hearing these unexpected words, but unfortunately this conversation was productive of no good result : the general was a Calvinist.

At the mission of Bréda a magistrate of the city, who was baptized in the Catholic Church, but who bore ill-will towards the fathers, presented himself at the residence of the pastor

where they lodged, and demanded their passports, without which, he said, they would not be allowed to remain in Brabant. The fathers not having these documents with them, Father Bernard very decidedly replied :

“I am a Hollander ; I do not, then, recognize the authority of the government to prohibit my sojourn or my preaching in Bréda. This evening I will ascend the pulpit, and will tell the faithful that, in consequence of your prohibition, the mission will be discontinued from that moment. But it is useless to add, sir, that the consequences of this resolution will be imputed to you ; you will be responsible, understand it well, for whatever happens. I advise you to be prudent ; for you cannot be ignorant of the feelings of all the Catholics of your city towards us.”

This courageous reply quite disconcerted the functionary ; but he had recourse to another expedient. He applied to the governor of the province, M. Borret, who was a sincere Catholic and much attached to the fathers, and asked him to act according to the law. M. Borret baffled the intrigue, without, however, failing in his duty. After a delay of a few days he wrote

to the magistrate, and informed him that the Redemptorists had a house at Wittem, which belonged to a province of the kingdom, and consequently did not need passports. At the same time he requested the magistrate to enquire whether the missionaries of Bréda belonged to the house of Wittem, adding that he awaited the result of the investigation before taking further steps. In the meantime the exercises continued with such success that the magistrate saw that it would not be worth the trouble to urge the matter at the risk of drawing upon himself the indignation of the entire city. The public prayers and sermons produced during this mission still greater fruits of grace and salvation.

I cannot omit relating another incident which shows us both the courage of our missionary and the kind of enemies he encountered.

On the very day of the opening of the mission at Grave, in Northern Brabant, a circus troupe came to give an exhibition to the public. This was apparently a plot formed by some bad characters of the place, who aimed at preventing the holy exercises. But Father Bernard was so

sure of the good dispositions of his auditors that he hoped, by the grace of God, to make the troupe leave the city.

“My brethren,” he said from the pulpit, “an infernal plot has been formed against you; a circus troupe has come from Antwerp, bringing you frivolous amusements and dissipation. We, the ministers of the Most High, have come to preach recollection, penance, and return to God. Heaven and hell cannot be united? Consequently, I make the painful announcement that the mission, which ought to constitute your happiness, has been interrupted, and it discontinues from this moment. . . . Saint Alphonsus acted in the same manner under similar circumstances; we must imitate his great example, and abandon you to yourselves.”

At this announcement the people were thunderstruck, and the religious portion of the population used violence to prevent the departure of the fathers. The burgomaster interceded with the villagers to request the fathers not to carry out the resolution they had announced in the church. He said that the troupe had come without his knowledge, and, by an unfortunate

coincidence, precisely at the time of the mission. Father Bernard, nevertheless, remained firm, and informed the magistrate that worldly amusements and religious ceremonies could in no wise be united.

The burgomaster agreed to this ; and, fearing a disturbance if the fathers should leave, promised to use his efforts to obviate all difficulties.

The manager of the circus came to apologize to the fathers of the mission, and openly avowed that they had been sent for by some residents of the city. He, moreover, promised to leave, if the fathers would give him one hundred florins to defray expenses. Father Bernard laughingly replied that, not having called them to Grave, he would not pay their travelling expenses ; that they were free to remain, and the fathers would leave that instant. The manager was not a little surprised at this firmness, and the civil magistrate was left in embarrassment. From the dispositions of the inhabitants they were wise enough to see that the best plan was to abandon their designs and to decamp. The next day, to the great disappointment of the

wicked, the circus was closed, and the manager with his troupe returned to Antwerp. The mission was crowned with success; with the exception of a few hardened sinners, the entire population approached the holy sacraments.

The mission at Hulst, in Zealand, afforded Father Bernard another opportunity of showing his presence of mind and the energy of his character. On the arrival of the three missionaries before the residence of the dean of the city, the street was blockaded by a crowd of curious spectators, and a gendarme with official air placed himself in front of the carriage in which the fathers were seated.

“Take care,” said Father Bernard with composure to the father who accompanied him, “we will have many difficulties to encounter here.”

His anticipation of difficulties—I dare not say his fear—was verified.

On the evening of the third day another gendarme rang the bell at the dean’s door, and asked to speak with his three guests. Father Bernard quieted his two confrères and the affrighted dean, and communicated to them the

plan he had devised. He proposed to interrogate the gendarme, while his two companions filled the respective offices of clerk and usher.

The father, seated in an arm-chair, addressed the gendarme with the gravity of a judge.

“My friend, what do you wish?”

“I am sent by my lieutenant ; I did not come of my own accord.”

“Do not be uneasy about that ; but who is your lieutenant?”

“Mr. N——, of Ghent.”

“And what does he want with us?”

“I am to enquire whether you are strangers or not.”

“Go and tell Mr. N—— that we are natives of Holland, and that we exercise our ministry in Holland. And now, another word : should your lieutenant desire to know more, let him address himself to the chief authorities of the Hague ; they will teach him how to treat the subjects of the king.”

The poor gendarme, covered with confusion, commenced to stammer out excuses, and told his judge that he had also orders to learn the impression produced by his sermons. “And on

this point," he said, "I will be able to speak from experience; for, although a Protestant, I have listened to your sermons, and they have deeply affected me."

He then took a humble leave of the fathers.

It was thus that Father Bernard put in practice the excellent advice which had been given him by his old teacher, M. Van Bommel: "Reply to the evil-disposed by questions, and force them to submit to be questioned, instead of submitting yourself."

Those who know the mysteries of grace and its connection with suffering and prayer will not be surprised at the prodigious influence exercised by Father Bernard.

He possessed, it is true, all the human endowments which are necessary for a great orator,—*"vir bonus dicendi peritus."* Of majestic appearance, possessed of strong and flexible voice, rare facility of expression, ardent language, profound science—all were united harmoniously in his person. But his true power of expression came from higher sources; it flowed from his lively faith and his ardent love for Jesus Christ,

for the Church, and for souls. This triple love was the principle of his zeal and the source of his most beautiful inspirations.

“He was not only a man powerful in words—as but few men are—but he was also powerful in prayer. He possessed the spirit of prayer, which accompanied him in all his actions; and two things contributed with prayer to render his actions efficacious, or rather supernatural—these were his lively faith and his love of the cross. God always mingled bitterness with his success. I know it; he often confided it to me.” Such is the testimony given of him by his confrère and colaborer, the Rev. Father Victor Dechamps, at present Archbishop of Mechlin.

The reader will no doubt be pleased to hear Mgr. Dechamps again:

“While yet a novice at Saint Trond I attended a mission sermon preached in the open air by Father Bernard before thousands of listeners. The master of novices, Father Villani,\*

\* Canon Villani, a professor of the Episcopal Seminary of Tournay, became a religious in 1833, taking the name of Villani, in honor of P. Andrew Villani, who was Saint Alphonse's confessor. M. Villani received his eminent pupil, Victor

a saintly man, seeing the impression produced on this weeping audience, addressed to me these words, which I shall never forget :

“ ‘ What a misfortune would it not have been had such a man not become a missionary ! See what it is to follow one’s vocation ! ’ ”

“ I will give an example of his style of preaching and instructing. I was engaged in giving a mission at Chênée, near Liége. Father Bernard arrived a few days after the opening of the mission, and asked me what was to be the subject of the sermon at High Mass. I answered that the order of exercises called for contrition, and I added :

“ ‘ You could not have guessed it ; are you prepared ? ’ ”

“ He replied : ‘ I will tell them the same thing four times, but in different ways ; I hope thus to be understood. ’ ”

“ And he proceeded in the following order : First, he explained what contrition is ; secondly, that which is but the appearance ; thirdly, he re-

Augustus Dechamps, into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and was his director in the novitiate at Saint Trond. Father Villani died a holy death in 1838.

presented to them a man who was really contrite ; and, fourthly, one who was not contrite in the confessional nor elsewhere, neither before nor after the mission. I can say that one might have seen his words sinking into souls : ‘ Usque ad divisionem animæ et spiritus.’ The true principle of his life, as religious and missionary, is found in the resolutions and prayers written by himself in a book of which he constantly made use.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FATHER BERNARD'S FIRST VOYAGE TO AMERICA.

FATHER BERNARD'S apostolate was not confined to the European continent; Providence so disposed events as to transfer his talents and labors to the New World. We will first give an account of how the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer was introduced into the United States. At the request of Bishop Fenwick, of Cincinnati, Fathers Saenderlé, Hetscher, and Tschenhers, accompanied by three lay brothers, left Vienna in 1832, and entered upon the work of the missions in the Diocese of Cincinnati, which at that time included that of Detroit. For six years they struggled against difficulties which rendered the establishment of a regular house impossible; they could only establish stations at Norwalk, at Saint Mary's among the Indians, and at Arbrecroche. This last station, the most important

of the three, was placed under the direction of Father Saenderlé. The first object of the Redemptorists was to establish a central house which would serve as a rallying-point. Abandoning their first posts, they established themselves in 1839 in Pittsburg,\* which then belonged to the Diocese of Philadelphia. The following year the zealous Archbishop Eccleston, of Baltimore, made the Congregation advantageous offers of a church and a house, on condition that the fathers would devote themselves to the spiritual care of the German population of Baltimore, which comprised nearly four thousand souls. The proposal was accepted, and a new party of Redemptorists left Europe in January, 1841. Father Alexander Cvitchkowitz, the former rector of the house at Wittem, left London with four young priests, three of whom had completed their studies at Wittem. Maryland soon recognized the existence of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In 1842 the Fathers were established in New York; in 1843, in Philadelphia; and in 1845, in Buffalo. The same

\* The Convent of Pittsburg was the first that was founded by the Redemptorists in the United States of America.

year (1845) Father Frederick de Held, the first Provincial of Belgium,\* repaired to America in order to make a canonical visitation of the communities that had just been established there. He selected Father Bernard as the companion of his voyage and labors. The duties which Father Bernard had yet to perform prevented his bidding farewell to his beloved parents; but, resigned and submissive, he offered this painful sacrifice to God, hastily made his preparations, and joyfully commenced his voyage on the 11th of April, 1845. Embarking at Ostend, our two religious directed their course to London, and from thence to Liverpool, where they were joined by three other Redemptorists. On the 19th of April, it being Saturday, they left Liverpool on board the steamer *Hibernia*, under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin, Star of the Sea. The first days of the voyage passed by very quietly; but on the 21st of April, about eight o'clock in the evening, a fire broke out in the kitchen, and the flames were extinguished

\* The province of Belgium was canonically erected July 2, 1841. A decree of the Propaganda attached the Redemptorists of America to the province of Belgium.

with great difficulty. During the night of the 25th of April the sea became very stormy, and a new danger threatened them. On the following night the tempest raged furiously. The violent and irregular motion of the ship, the howling of the winds, the cries of the sailors and passengers, all contributed to increase the terror. On the 29th a new danger arose. The ocean presented a frightful spectacle: icebergs as high as mountains struck the side of the steamer, causing great damage to the wheels. Our fathers considered themselves at the point of death, thought only of their last hour, and heard each other's confessions. To add to the misfortune, the rudder-chain broke, and the steamer was abandoned, in the middle of the night, to the mercy of the winds and waves. Contrary to all expectations, an Irish vessel, which was in search of seal that were couching on the ice, approached and kindly offered assistance. By the aid of the Irish sailors the *Hibernia* was delivered from danger on the 1st of May, the Feast of the Ascension. But another danger still awaited them. In the night of the 2d of May the passengers were suddenly

aroused from sleep by a cry of distress. Another iceberg threateningly and rapidly advanced ; but fortunately the crew got quickly to work and prevented the collision. Had they delayed but a minute, the vessel would have been buried in the abyss.\*

In these critical moments Father Bernard suffered all the miseries of sea-sickness, but his courage never wavered. He gives an account of this perilous voyage in a letter in which we read these lines, that afford another proof of his piety :

“ Do not think I exaggerate in relating to you the triple danger to which we were exposed. But my principal regret was not to be able to say Mass. Where could the need of the divine mysteries be more sensibly felt than in the terrible position in which we found ourselves ? But God gave me grace to believe in his Providence, and I repeated interiorly the words of the Psalmist : ‘ Ignis, grando, nix, glacies, spiritus procellarum, quæ faciunt verbum ejus ’—‘ Fire, hail, snow, ice, the winds and

\* See letter of Rev. Father de Held to Rev. Father De-champs, in Appendix F.

tempests, obey his will.' When in my state-room, kneeling at the feet of Father Provincial, I made my general confession, which I believed to be the last of my life; when I renewed my religious vows, my soul, it is true, recoiled from appearing before its Sovereign Judge in the midst of the ocean. But when, on the other hand, I reflected that I was at sea by the will of God, in the interest of our dear Congregation, at the side of our beloved superior, to whom I had resolved to attach myself until my last moment, then—yes, then—I repeated the above words of the Psalmist with the gratitude of a child towards God, and I felt comforted. I promised him that if it pleased him to save my life, I would serve him in future more faithfully, and would labor more zealously for the salvation of my neighbor than I had hitherto done. I pressed to my heart my crucifix, my rosary, and my rule; for, if it was the will of God, I desired to die like a true Redemptorist."

The following incident is characteristic of Father Bernard. His lively faith caused him to see the work of the devil in the furious tempest from which the fathers were saved. He went

upon the deck of the vessel, and, taking a handful of blessed medals, cast them into the waves, as if to exorcise the sea. In relating this circumstance to a confrère he said:

“It is true that we believe sufficiently in the presence of God ; perhaps we think too seldom of the presence and action of the devil. I learned this from an old person ; it is, moreover, something which I have often experienced myself. It sometimes happened that I trembled in all my limbs before ascending the pulpit, even in the smallest villages. I had recourse to private exorcism, and every time I felt the salutary effects of them. In the same way I have frequently opened the lips of persons in the confessional which false shame, caused by Satan, had sealed.”

Father Bernard practised it himself, and recommended the use of private exorcism as an excellent remedy against sacrilegious confessions. For he who is convinced of the power of the devil, and believes in the supernatural, finds nothing therein which is not credible. Does not Saint Paul teach us that we must combat against the evil powers that fill the darkness that

surrounds us? \* But to return to the voyage of 1845. .

When the missionaries arrived at Halifax, the provincial offered the Holy Sacrifice, after which the fathers recited the hymn of praise to God for having, in his merciful protection, preserved them from death. In August of the same year, 1845, they left the shores of America to return to Europe, and on the 9th of September Father Bernard, after a prosperous voyage, again found himself in the midst of his confrères at the Convent of Wittem. During his short absence he not only visited, with Father de Held, the various communities of the Congregation, but also studied the religious character of the inhabitants, particularly of the Catholics. The cities of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburg, Rochester, Buffalo, Monroe, Chicago, had nearly all witnessed the power of his eloquence. He labored with fruit amongst those who for many years had not seen a priest. Many bishops learned to know and to appreciate him as the type of a missionary, as a man capable of

\* Eph. vi.

doing great things. Father Bernard's correspondence testified to the ardor with which he endeavored to obtain information on all the questions which occupied the American clergy, as education, the scarcity of priests and churches, the absence of a truly Christian spirit in the great mass of the people, the proselytism carried on by the sects which overrun the United States. His superiors had particularly this end in view in giving him as a companion to the visitor. This was to be an exploring tour, an immediate preparation for the apostolic career that awaited Father Bernard beyond the seas; and as in Belgium, and particularly in Liège, he had given the strongest impulse to the work of the missions, so he was destined to extend it to the New World, and to introduce there the salutary influence of the priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

The progress of the Congregation in America was very remarkable after the foundation of the convent at Pittsburg. The labors of the fathers in behalf of poor Catholics, and especially of the German immigrants, gained for them the affection of all. Many among

them terminated their earthly career with the reputation of extraordinary virtue. We will name but Father Francis Poilvache, who died at Monroe, January 26, 1848, and Father Czackert, who died on the 2d of the following September, a victim to his charity, in administering to those who were attacked with the yellow fever, which broke out in New Orleans.\*

\*See Appendix G, Sketch of the Life of Father Poilvache.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FATHER BERNARD RESUMES HIS APOSTOLIC LABORS IN BELGIUM.

SCARCELY had Father Bernard returned to Wittem when he resumed the course of his usual labors, and until January, 1848, we find him nearly every month engaged in giving two or three missions or other religious exercises.

I have already spoken of the mission which was given at Hulst in 1845. Father Bernard there triumphed over the ill-will of some men by his great energy, and over irreligion by his persuasive eloquence. The same year he had the happiness to reconcile to God the half-savage inhabitants of the heath called "Het Heiken," on the confines of the barony of Bréda and the marquisate of Berg-op-Zoom.\*

At the grand jubilee of Liége, celebrated in 1846, on the occasion of the sixth centennial

\* See Appendix H.

commemoration of the institution of the festival of Corpus Christi, many Redemptorists were engaged in the twofold ministry of preaching and hearing confessions. Father Bernard, who directed the exercises in the Church of Saint Denis, preached every evening. The eloquence of Father Dechamps resounded in the cathedral, rivaling that of Parisis, Giraud, Ravignan, Dupanloup, and other orators of no less renown. The jubilee of Liège was productive of immense good. God, the just appreciator of the works of man, alone knows the share of merit that will fall to the sons of Saint Alphonsus for the great zeal which they displayed in these exercises.\*

For two successive terms Father Bernard was prefect of the second novitiate, which Saint Alphonsus, in his Constitutions, prescribes as an immediate preparation for the missionary career. He possessed great art in encouraging the young priests under his direction, and in communicating to them the sacred fire of which they stood in need. According to the testimony of a father who lived with him, there never was a professor

\**Histoire du diocèse de Liège, de M. Daris*, vol. iv. pp. 372-375; *Journal Hist.*, vol. xiii. p. 145.

of sacred eloquence who could more successfully develop the oratorical talents of his pupils; after hearing him the most timid felt that they could preach. The prefect was justly appreciated by his superiors. This is proved by the following letter, sent from Vienna by the Most Rev. Vicar-General to the fathers of the second Novitiate at Liége: .

“ You are, then, going to take your flight. Soon you will fly; and as the bird is known by soaring, I hope to see in you, under so good a master, and one of so good a will, birds uplifted by the Holy Spirit. You are going to fly, not as a balloon—the work of the mind of man, who knows not whether it will be driven to the brink of a precipice or into the water—but as a sparrow or a wise turtle-dove, that never loses sight of its nest, where it takes refuge with its little ones, and is sheltered from the birds of prey. Fly, then, neither too high nor too far, so as to forget your novitiate, and the good resolutions that, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you have formed. You have a good master; engrave in your minds and in your hearts the lessons that his virtue and experience dictate to you,

in order to be able to unite the active with the contemplative life.

“JOSEPH PASSERAT, C.SS.R.,  
“Vicar-General.”

Father Bernard had been sent to Liége to organize and establish the second novitiate. He remained in this city from January, 1848, until the following October. The moment was now at hand to open the campaign in the American continent. This called for a veteran, inured to war, and one who was not to be overcome by obstacles. Experience, activity, energy of character, robust health, and, above all, a spirit of self-abnegation, were necessary to ensure success. These qualities were all found united in an eminent degree in the prefect of the second novitiate. Hence he was appointed to the important post of vice-provincial of all the houses and stations of the Congregation in North America, and, invested with this office, he left Europe for the second time. Before commencing his voyage, he went to Bavaria and Austria, in hopes of procuring some useful and zealous co-laborers. He communicated to his family

the news of his intended departure in such a way that all their anxiety was dispelled :

“ What is, after all, this small sacrifice made to Saint Alphonsus in comparison to all the favors for which I am indebted to him? I will be exceedingly happy when I hear that my relatives are as satisfied and as content as I am, and that my whole family, above all, my good mother, will adore with resignation the amiable decrees of Providence.” His mother was this time to bear alone the greatness of the sacrifice ; for his father had piously yielded his soul to God on the 28th of September, 1846, the eve of the feast of his patron, Saint Michael. The pious lady did not allow herself to be overcome by grief ; and although her maternal heart heaved many sighs when her Bernard, returning from Germany, came to bid her farewell, still she did not the less courageously consign her child into the hands of her Saviour.

## CHAPTER X.

### FATHER BERNARD'S APOSTOLATE IN THE UNITED STATES.

ON the 20th of December, 1848, Father Bernard embarked at Southampton with four fathers of the order and ten nuns.\* A few days after their departure such a violent storm arose that the captain declared that during the twenty-six years of his maritime life he had never witnessed a similar tempest. The vessel was frightfully tossed about; the cabin, which contained the sisters, was filled with water, and they thought their last hour had come. But, thanks to the captain's presence of mind, and thanks, above all, to the divine protection, the ship was saved, and it anchored in the harbor of New York January 8, 1849.

From New York the vice-provincial went to Baltimore, and fixed his residence in that city. After having investigated the condition of his

\* *Journal Hist. de M. Kersten*, vol. xv. p. 356.

religious family and of the Catholic population, he visited, in January and February, the cities of Pittsburg, Cincinnati, St. Louis, New Orleans, and several other places, braving the cold of winter and undergoing all kinds of hardships. *even* "Occupations," he wrote, "are not wanting. The great responsibility to God, who has called me, and to our Congregation, that has sent me here, weighs heavily upon me. Little crosses are met with everywhere, and particularly by those who have the responsibility of governing; but when I see what others do and suffer here for God and for his Holy Church, I find my cross exceedingly light. . . . Tell all our fathers and brothers, all our acquaintances at Liége, all the benefactors of the Congregation, that I am well and always cheerful."

On returning to Baltimore at the close of February, he made, after a rest of three weeks, a tour of nearly nine hundred miles. He visited successively New York, Philadelphia, Rochester, Buffalo, and Pittsburg, preaching there, according to exigencies, in German, English, and French. No one could have been happier than he when he labored in Rochester among the

French Canadians, who collected there on Sundays at the house of the fathers. Three-fourths of them had not seen a priest for twenty or thirty years. In Buffalo he superintended, rule in hand, the construction of a church; in New York he was, to use his own expression, nailed to his desk—he whose life had been until then but one public action. “In heaven alone will repose be given me,” he writes; “and its joys, being eternal, will suffice.”

In May, 1849, he was invited by the American episcopacy to take part in the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore, in which he actively assisted the heads of the dioceses in their synodal deliberations. At the same period he commenced to build a convent in that city, the expenses of which were chiefly defrayed by his friends in the Netherlands. He brought spiritual consolation to Catholics that were scattered in other places. At Uniontown he assembled the people every Sunday in a room to hear Mass. At Taneytown he could assemble them but once a month in a dilapidated house. He spent ten days at the German colony of St. Mary's, which was entrusted to the care of his confrères. He

travelled through the whole colony, sometimes on foot, at others on horseback. In this manner he penetrated dense forests and made his way over roads that were almost impassable. After some months' sojourn in Baltimore, he again went to Rochester and Buffalo to inspect the buildings in course of construction; thence he proceeded to Detroit. According to the wishes of Bishop Lefèvre, he undertook his first mission in the United States. He preached for nine days in succession, three and often four times every day. He had rarely experienced such great consolation on a mission, on account of the difficulties with which he was met; "for," he wrote, "the Canadians of Michigan, having been neglected for a long time on account of the scarcity of priests, are not easily converted; they are lukewarm and ignorant of all that regards religion." At the closing of the exercises he established the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Sovereign Pastor of souls. He then visited Monroe, where his heart was filled with consolation at seeing the many blessings that God had bestowed on the German, French, and English Catholics by the zealous

labors of his confrères ; he then returned to Baltimore, where he placed himself with renewed ardor at his writing-desk.

But all was not joy and happiness in a foreign land. The Congregation experienced a great loss by the fall of the steeple of the new church at Buffalo ; they were also necessitated to abandon the colony of St. Mary's, owing to a lawsuit and to pecuniary embarrassments. At Pittsburg the bigoted portion of the population, excited by the Protestant street-preachers, came one day to assault the fathers in their dwelling and in the church. They went to the last extremity, when the fathers, by the advice of the vice-provincial, handed over the keys to the mayor, who, becoming responsible, stationed cannon around the buildings and dispersed the cowardly mob.

These were sad trials, but Father Bernard was not to be discouraged. At the close of the year he wrote to his mother that he was always cheerful and happy.

“ If heaven blesses me,” he said, “ I attribute all to your prayers. I have now attained my forty-second year, and may yet be obliged to tread more than one thorny path, for in this

country nothing is gained without great difficulty ; but I leave all to God, who comforts me, and to his Holy Mother, whom I love and honor."

After having blessed the new church at Cumberland by the order and in the name of the Archbishop of Baltimore, he made another trip to New Orleans. In consideration of the continually increasing population in that city, he commended to the fathers the erection of a new convent. After the completion of this building he preached in three languages to the emigrants who had gone there to seek their fortunes. Although the sentiments of religion were very weak in that section of the United States, he left it full of hope for the future. Provided with jurisdiction for all the abandoned stations through which he passed, he visited Mobile, Montgomery, Opelousas, Griffin, Atlanta, Augusta, Charleston, Wilmington, and Richmond. He frequently met with destitute Catholics, whom he instructed in the Divine Word; he often came in contact with the poor slaves, whom he consoled in their misfortunes. Finally, he returned to Rochester, where the new

church had been completed, and the building of a convent was already commenced.

Father Bernard spent but one year in the United States. In April, 1850, he visited Detroit and Monroe, where the fathers had achieved the most consoling results. Churches and convents were multiplied or enlarged. The fathers were of the most exemplary zeal; confraternities and charitable associations of all kinds had been established, many conversions had been effected, many apostasies had been prevented. Thus, when, in the middle of the year 1850, he returned to Europe to assist at the assembly of the provincials at Bischenberg, in Alsatia,\* he could represent the United States as a country blessed by God, and one that only awaited an increase of apostolic labors to become a land of astonishing fertility. Pope Pius IX. having, on the 22d of June, 1850, erected the American houses into a separate province, Father Bernard was promoted to the rank of provincial by the

\* Bischofsberg, commonly called Bischenberg, *i.e.*, "Mountain of the Bishop," is situated five leagues from Strasbourg. In 1820 Father Passerat there established a community of Redemptorists in a convent which had been abandoned.

assembly at Bischenberg, and in this capacity crossed the Atlantic for a third time. In December, before his departure, he went to Amsterdam to visit his mother and to pass some days at the convent of the Redemptorists which had recently been erected in that city. As the Catholics were then celebrating the Papal Jubilee, he made it his duty to sit in the tribunal of penance, where he heard confessions in French, German, and Italian. Every opportunity of doing good to souls appeared to him one of those good fortunes that a Redemptorist cannot let pass.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FATHER BERNARD'S APOSTOLATE IN THE UNITED STATES—CONTINUED.

ON the 27th of January, 1851, Father Bernard left the port of Havre with the Redemptorists, among whom was Father Charles Louis De Landtsheer, formerly Vicar of Melsele, in the Diocese of Ghent. The voyage was beset with dangers; several times the vessel was on the point of foundering. But heaven protected its servants, and they had the good fortune of anchoring in the harbor of New York, on the feast of Saint Joseph, March 19, 1851.

During his sojourn at Amsterdam, in December, 1850, our missionary visited the maternal roof and embraced his mother for the last time. She died a holy death on the 25th of January, 1851. This painful news reached Father Bernard when in New York. It is touching to read the lines in which he communicates to his brothers and sisters the grief of his soul; it

was Saint Augustine mourning the death of Saint Monica.

“I cannot conceal it,” he says ; “ although for twenty years I have made to God the sacrifice of my parents and of my family, the death of my mother has not the less deeply afflicted me. Ah ! I know that I was her child—the child of an incomparable mother ! We have known her in life ; her death has caused us to see still more clearly what a treasure the infinite goodness of God had given us in the tenderness of this cherished mother ! Ah ! how happy you are, you who have seen our mother on her bed of suffering ; you who have been able to address to her words of consolation, to give her the last filial kiss ! It should be an alleviation to your grief to have witnessed her passage to a better life ; to have been able to entertain yourselves with her. As to myself, I find no one here who understands me when I speak of this good mother, when I mourn her loss. All I can do is to prostrate myself before my crucified Saviour, and to offer him as a son the sacrifice of the dearest of mothers. Ah ! more than ever do I thank God for all she has done for you and for me. I un-

ceasingly recommend her soul to him. Oh! may our last end be like unto hers."

This tenderness in the heart of a religious may perhaps surprise those who do not know that the religious life does not stifle the sentiments of nature, but purifies and sanctifies them. The complete consecration of the heart to God does not require us to be less affectionate to man.

"The most austere virtue," says Father Lacordaire, "does not exclude affection, but elevates and moderates it by mingling with our nature an element more than human."

This sad event placed Father Bernard in possession of a considerable estate. After finishing a retreat he thus wrote to one of his brothers:

"In meditating on the poverty of my Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem I made a vow to possess nothing on earth."

In consequence he made a donation of five thousand florins to the Netherlands for the school of Saint Vincent de Paul which had been erected at Amsterdam; as to the rest of his patrimony, he left it at the disposal of his superiors for the benefit of the churches of the Congregation in America.

On the 2d of April, 1852, Father Bernard met with a new affliction in the death of Father Landtsheer, who was carried off by typhoid fever, which broke out among the immigrants in New York. This young missionary, who had been but one year in America, "died like a saint, a victim to his charity for his brothers." This is the testimony given of him by Father Bernard.\*

For twenty years the sons of Saint Alphonsus had watered with their sweat the soil of the New World; it was now time to cultivate it with order and to sow an abundant harvest. The work of evangelization must be accomplished by an uninterrupted succession of evangelical labors.

The series of missions commenced in April, 1851, in Saint Joseph's Church, New York, was regularly carried on by several priests of the Congregation. The provincial, like a true general, fought at the head of this pacific army. He went from city to city, from State to State, giving the exercises, which were often prolonged for four weeks. The sermons were everywhere

\* *Revue Catholique de Louvain*, v. x. p. 174.

followed by remarkable conversions, the work of divine grace. The cathedral in New York, which accommodates from three thousand five hundred to four thousand persons, was filled even to the altar-steps. A dense mass of eager listeners thronged the church and crowded the entrances. Some climbed to the windows of the church, in order to hear the sermons. One day Father Bernard spoke on the mercy of God, as he alone knew how to speak of it; and such was the impression he made on his audience that they sobbed aloud. The immense good he did on this occasion is known to God alone.

It was thus, according to the unanimous consent of witnesses, that the Congregation entered upon a career of prosperity, under the direction and through the apostolate of our Redemptorist.

We recall here with pleasure a circumstance which proves the exalted esteem which the American provincial enjoyed at this time in the Eternal City.

The bishops of the United States had proposed Father John Nepomucene Neumann for the episcopal see of Philadelphia, which was left

vacant, in 1851, by the translation of Rt. Rev. Francis Patrick Kenrick to the archiepiscopal see of Baltimore. Father Victor Dechamps, who was then in Rome, engaged in matters of business concerning the Congregation, was charged to hand to Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of the Propaganda, a letter from the Rev. Father Rudolph de Smetana, successor to the Rev. Father Passerat as vicar-general, together with a letter from Father Bernard, who was Father Neumann's provincial. Both humbly requested the Sovereign Pontiff not to deprive the family of Saint Alphonsus of so useful a member as was the candidate of the American bishops. The cardinal-prefect opened the two letters, and, on discovering that one bore the signature of Father Bernard, exclaimed :

“ Ah ! Father Bernard. He too would be an excellent bishop. I understand how, from his point of view, he had reasons for wishing to prevent the nomination of Father Neumann ; but the Holy Father has reasons for not granting his desire.”

Father Neumann was preconized bishop in 1852. He occupied the episcopal see of Phila-

delphia but seven years; death unexpectedly took him from his flock on January 5, 1860.\* After the third year, Father Bernard was relieved from the American provincialship. He returned to the rank of a simple soldier, and received orders to exert his energy in gaining souls to God, "in spiritu et virtute Eliæ," in the British Islands.

\* See *Funeral Obsequies of Rt. Rev. John Nepomucene Neumann, D.D., C.S.S.R., Fourth Bishop of Philadelphia.* Philadelphia, 1860.

## CHAPTER XII.

### APOSTOLATE OF FATHER BERNARD IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE NETHERLANDS.

**I**N the year 1852 the indefatigable missionary was appointed superior of the convent at Limerick, in Ireland, and was placed at the head of the apostolic labors of the Congregation in that country, as also in England and Scotland. He resided there for three years. During that interval he gave missions in Limerick, Cork, Mallow, Dublin, London, Clapham, etc. To my knowledge, the accounts that exist of this period of his life are very incomplete. I have, however, before me a letter written from Limerick (May 25, 1873) to a Belgian Redemptorist, a portion of which I here insert :

“As regards the missions given by Father Bernard in this country, I can only repeat what you already know of his labors on the Continent and in America. It will suffice to say that he excited the admiration of the people and of the

clergy, who could not understand how he could speak in a foreign language so as to move an immense concourse to tears. This was of frequent occurrence, even when treating of dogmatical subjects or when giving instructions. I recollect having heard him in the cathedral of Cork, before an assembly of six or seven thousand persons. In this sermon he spoke of the duties of parents towards their children. After the sermon his hearers remained riveted, as it were, to the floor of the church, weeping and sobbing. The bishop—who is still living—received him in the sacristy with open arms, thus addressing him:

“‘Indeed, Father Bernard, you teach us!’

“The mission given by him in Saint Michael’s Church, Dublin, was one of the most wonderful he ever gave, considering the number of young men who returned to God. All the regular and secular clergy of the neighboring parishes testified to this fact; and to this day it is spoken of as the *great mission*. I should also add that Father Bernard was remarkably condescending towards the other fathers, and

that they considered it a happiness to be sent on a mission with him."

In 1855 Father Bernard left Ireland to return no more. He repaired directly to the capital of Catholicity, where the provincials of different provinces were to assemble in General Chapter. He was to take part in the deliberations as elector for the provinces of Holland and England. We may well imagine his joy, on seeing once more the Holy City, the Roman College, where he had made his theological studies, the Basilicas, and even the more modest sanctuaries which he had so frequently visited in his youth. He saw too, on this visit, with unspeakable delight, the great Pius IX., the fourth pope whose apostolical benediction he had the happiness to receive.

After a continued absence of nearly seven years, Father Bernard returned to his native country, never more to leave it. In November, 1855, we find him giving the retreat to the clergy of the Diocese of Ruremonde, in the seminary of that city.

In February, 1862, he took a most active part in the sermons delivered in the churches of

Ghent on the occasion of the twelfth centennial of the death of Saint Amandus, the Apostle of Flanders. He preached every evening in the cathedral before an audience composed of not only the faithful of all classes of society, but also the curés of the city, the canons, his Grace Mgr. Delebecque, etc. One of the vicars-general said :

“ One never grows weary of listening to him ; for indeed he preaches like a Holy Father.”

He had lost nothing of that energy of mind and body with which he had commenced his ministry in 1834 ; the same fire of zeal still burned in his soul.

At the jubilee of Ghent a French prelate, the Archbishop of Cambray, assisted at two sermons preached by Father Bernard. Every one was astonished that he could listen so attentively to a preacher whose language he did not understand. “ I love,” he said, “ to see that man in the pulpit ; his mere action gives me sufficient satisfaction. Those penetrating words ought to effect an immense good to souls. I would be very happy to have such a preacher in my diocese.” As to the Bishop of Ghent, he ardently thanked the Re-

demptorist apostle, repeatedly expressing the hope of again hearing him in his cathedral.

From this time until his last mission, given in the spring of 1865, but six months intervened in which he did not give any public religious exercise; during the rest of the time he took part in two or three missions or retreats. It is no exaggeration to say that during the last ten years of his life the entire kingdom of the Netherlands listened to his eloquence. It is impossible to enter into a detailed description of his apostolate in that kingdom. I will simply state that the record of his labors, as given in a sketch of his life written in Dutch, comprises 10 triduos, 20 octaves, 29 renewals of missions, 176 retreats, 228 great missions, not including many sermons preached on various occasions.

Father Bernard, considered as a missionary and preacher of the Word of God, is to us the living expression of this saying of an ancient, "Totus in illis." In his great zeal for the salvation of souls all his moral and physical powers were employed, and exclusively, in the noble work to which he had devoted himself; all else to him was secondary and unimportant. To re-

call sinners, to strengthen the weak, to encourage the good, to extend the kingdom of the Divine Redeemer, not only in the hearts of Christians, but also among those who sat in the regions of the shadow of death, was his apostolic work and his constant happiness.

In 1856-57 there was question of confiding the Isle of Curaçoa to the Sons of Saint Alphonsus; but the project, owing to physical impossibilities, could not be carried out. Father Bernard felt somewhat disappointed. "Believe me," he said to one of his confrères, "could the plan have been realized, I would willingly leave for the Antilles. I would still be able to work there for many years at the salvation of those poor people."

The fervent servant of God was soon to finish the course of his apostolic labors in the fulness of age and strength; but, as a valiant warrior, he was to die on the battle-field. We will see in the sequel that about four months before his death he had a presentiment of his approaching end.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### FATHER BERNARD AS PRIEST AND RELIGIOUS.

HAVING described Father Bernard as preacher and missionary, although imperfectly, I will now venture to give an idea of him in his character of priest and religious; but in this I must confine myself to a few characteristic traits.

This powerful man, who from the pulpit filled the souls of his hearers with the most terrible emotions, poured the balm of consolation into the hearts of all in the tribunal of penance. At the altar he preached by his grave and recollected appearance. He would have scrupled to say Mass in less than half an hour. The Mass was preceded by a long preparation, and followed by an equally long thanksgiving, at least when the duties of the ministry did not compel him to abridge this precious time. It was only necessary to see him recite the divine office or other

prayers to feel one's self drawn to fervor and recollection.

The practice, above all others, of a true Redemptorist, is that of the daily adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Saint Alphonsus made this an express rule, which he confirmed by his example. Father Bernard loved our Divine Lord too tenderly not to have been a faithful observer of this point of the rule. He went daily to prostrate himself before the tabernacle to adore Jesus Christ, the Divine Missionary and Pastor of souls.

It was there that his piety was centred, and there he found sweet repose ; there he enkindled in his soul the sacred flame of the apostolate. During his last illness he made his adoration in spirit ; a student went daily to his bed of suffering to read to him the *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, by Saint Alphonsus.

To the love of Jesus hidden under the eucharistic veils Father Bernard joined a tender and profound compassion for our Lord's sufferings, and honored his Sacred Heart with an especial devotion. He made the stations of the cross daily, unless prevented by some serious cause.

In his sermons and conversations he took advantage of every opportunity to recommend this practice, the source of so many precious graces.

In the house where he lodged during a mission it was frequently noticed that he passed the night extended upon the floor. This was also his custom at the convent.

In the interior of the convent his life presented nothing extraordinary; he simply imposed on himself perfection in ordinary things and in the observance of the holy rule. "At work he was a man," said one of his confrères; "in the community he was a child." So well did he know how to mingle simplicity with obedience; so much did his natural amenity concur to the charm of relaxation in the usual recreations.

He considered it as an inestimable grace to belong to the Congregation of the holy Bishop of Saint Agatha, and he venerated it as his mother. "I am assured," he wrote in his *Manual*, "that Jesus Christ lovingly regards our little family, that he cherishes it as the apple of his eye. I have the most certain confidence that our little flock will always go on gradually in-

creasing—not, indeed, in wealth and honors, but in promoting the glory of God, and in spreading by our labors a greater knowledge and love of Jesus Christ among others.” These were the very thoughts of Saint Alphonsus.

Having been professor of theology, prefect of the novitiate, vice-provincial, and provincial, he knew how to communicate to those under his care that ardent love for science and for sacerdotal perfection, that zeal for souls which burned within him, those supernatural motives which guided him in all things, and which he had drawn from the inspiring writings of Saint Alphonsus and from prayer.

It is true that he was not exempt from a certain excess of warmth at times, and more than once his will got the better of him, as it were, under the impulse of the moment, and the good father was caught in the very act of harshness or impatience. These were his faults; but, like Saint Francis de Sales, he never made a truce with his enemy, and more than once he gained the victory over himself in critical moments. Did he sustain his opinion in theological discussions with too much ardor, or did he allow himself too

great fervor in exercising the duties of his ministry, he deplored it as a crime, an unworthiness in a religious, and he did not fail at the chapter of faults to cast himself on his knees and disclose his repeated failings. We are assured that in his zeal to make reparation he would have asked pardon publicly in the church, had his superiors not prevented him. This latter disposition was the effect partly of his natural uprightness of mind, and partly of that perfect self-abnegation which he had learned from the life of his blessed father.

If he did not reach the eminent sanctity of Saint Alphonsus, nor possess the religious virtues of Clement Maria Hoffbauer, or even of Joseph Passerat, he took them as models. His order of virtue was to tend unceasingly to approach as nearly as possible the great Model of perfection, of whom he never lost sight, and who is none other than the Divine Redeemer himself.

Although he was ever attentive to keep his mind in a state of recollection and to walk in the divine presence, he did not neglect every year to strengthen himself spiritually in solitude and retreat. He used to say that he enjoyed the peace

of heaven when, after having passed some months amid the distractions which exterior labors and apostolic duties necessarily involve, he could enter into himself and provide for his own spiritual needs.

Filled with a sense of deep gratitude towards God, it was his custom to celebrate the anniversaries of his baptism, of his promotion to the priesthood, and of his religious profession, by special devotions commemorative of these happy events. At a mission in a village he was seen to pass the entire morning of the last day spent there before the Blessed Sacrament. On being asked the reason he unaffectedly replied :

“ I have to thank God for having made me a priest ; it is thirty years to-day.”

When he returned from a city or village where he had been exercising his apostolate, it was his custom to devote the first day to reading hastily the periodical publications, so as to keep himself informed on the questions of modern science. He then recreated himself in reading the fathers of the Church, especially Saint John Chrysostom, in the study of some theologian, or in the composition of dogmatic or moral instructions.

The active missionary again became the contemplative religious.

Notwithstanding his rare faculty of speech and his vast science of religion, Father Bernard never entered the pulpit without suitable preparation. He knew how to speak, but he also wished to know in advance what was necessary to be said. Within the four walls of his cell he wrote complete sermons, or at least made a sketch of them. In undertaking a mission he prepared his batteries during the journey, as also in free hours.

“ They seem to think,” he humbly said, “ that to preach I have but to open my mouth ; the truth is, I need as much study and preparation as others. I have frequently found myself in such perplexity that I ran, with pen, ink, and paper, to the Blessed Sacrament, in order to say there, ‘ My good Jesus, if it must be done in this manner, thou must surely come to my assistance.’ ”

The reader has no doubt admired the tender affection he bore to his father and mother. He also cherished his kindred ; absent or present, he was ever to them a counsellor, guide, and consoler ; he participated in their happiness and af-

flections. Whenever the duties of his apostolate permitted him to visit his family (which seldom happened), he was the joy of all. He condescended to mingle in the youthful recreations of his nephews and nieces; with those of mature age his conversation was full of animation, gravity, and edification. One day he was seen kneeling at the tombs of the members of his family, devoutly reciting the rosary; tears interrupted his devotion, and he exclaimed to those who accompanied him:

“ All those who repose here were very good.”

But Father Bernard's love was not confined to his family according to the flesh, nor to his brothers in religion; it extended to all the faithful, to the good, to unbelievers, and to sinners. This universal love of his neighbor had its source in the love of God, which was first in his heart. From this love sprang that unlimited devotedness, that untiring activity, by which, after the example of the apostle of the Gentiles, he made himself all to all, to gain all to Jesus Christ, and it remained unchanged to the last day of his life.

He possessed the secret of accepting with equal joy good or bad fortune. It was impossi-

ble to detect in him the least shadow of preference, otherwise so natural to self-love ; no complacency in his own labors, no discouragement from contradictions, no sadness on account of an injury. Insensible to the insults of the wicked, to certain prejudices of the good, he was indifferent to applause, and never permitted himself to be elated by that sort of enthusiastic popularity which by degrees was attached to his name. If the hospitable welcome of the clergy of the parishes gave him great pleasure, forced privations, the fatigues of the confessional, the inconveniences of travelling, the dangers of the sea, did not disturb his serenity. He never knew fear nor betrayed cowardice ; he was solely occupied with the glory of God and the salvation of souls. On extraordinary occasions, as on ordinary ones, he was admirably self-possessed ; he was ever happy and cheerful—always superior to events : “ *In verbo veritatis, in virtute Dei, per gloriam et ignobilitatem, per infamiam et bonam famam.*” \*

The following little incident, although unimportant in itself, will be interesting, as exhibiting

\* 2 Cor. vi.

a trait of his character. One day, in repairing to a village of Northern Brabant, he, in company with a confrère, travelled through one of those vast heaths which are frequently met with in those parts. The jolting of the heavy farm-cart in which they were carried over rugged roads continually threw the two missionaries against each other. Father Bernard took pleasure in relating, with a hearty laugh, this little incident, from which they escaped without broken ribs. A few days later the two fathers were forced to accept of the use of a splendid carriage, drawn by two horses and mounted by footmen, whose livery was laced on all the seams. His companion felt uneasy, as so much luxury seemed but little in harmony with the voluntary poverty of the cloister.

“As regards myself,” humorously said Father Bernard, “I am not in the least inconvenienced in this equipage: ‘Scio abundare, et scio penuriam pati.’\* In coming we were knocked about in a cart, and we were satisfied; in leaving we are borne in triumph like lords; so, father, let us try to be resigned.”

\* I know both how to abound, and to suffer need.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FATHER BERNARD'S TENDER DEVOTION TO THE MOTHER OF GOD.

THE love of Jesus and Mary go hand in hand in the religious life and devotions of the true Christian. It is, therefore, not astonishing that Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, the tender lover of Jesus, was so devoted a servant of his Divine Mother. Wishing to impart this united affection to his children, he thus wrote to them :

“ All the members of our Congregation should have an especial love for Jesus Christ in the most Holy Eucharist, and for the Immaculate Virgin.”

Among other pious practices in honor of Mary, he imposed upon them that of a daily visit and a daily recitation of at least the third part of the rosary. Not satisfied with fulfilling these prescriptions of the holy rule, Father Bernard endeavored to imitate in all things the de-

votion of the holy founder toward the Mother of God.

Saint Alphonsus daily recited the five psalms composed by Saint Bonaventure in honor of the name of Mary. An old prayer-book, which was for a long time in Father Bernard's use, shows at the place of these psalms traces which plainly indicate that he recited them, if not every day, at least very often.

Saint Alphonsus honored in an especial manner the sufferings that the Queen of martyrs endured during her life on earth. In one of his admirable works he relates the following incident in the life of the virgin Saint Elizabeth:

“It was revealed to this servant of God that, Jesus and Mary one day appearing to Saint John the Evangelist, he heard Mary ask her beloved Son some particular grace for those who honored her seven dolours. Jesus promised to grant them four special graces: first, that those who invoke this Divine Mother by her sorrows will merit to obtain before death a sincere sorrow for their sins; secondly, that he will protect them in their tribulations, especially at the hour of death; thirdly, that he will impress upon their minds

the memory of his Passion, and will reward them eternally in heaven; fourthly, that he will commit them to the hands of Mary, that she may dispose of them according to her pleasure, and may procure for them all the graces she desires."

Saint Alphonsus also recited every day the "Chaplet of the Seven Dolors," and wore this rosary around his neck.\* Father Bernard faithfully imitated this edifying example. The chaplet of the seven dolors which he used is now the property of one of his convents; the happy possessor preserves it with religious respect.

Father Bernard used every effort to spread among the people this devotion so dear to his heart. It is to him that the church of the convent at Wittem owes that magnificent *Pictà* which is honored there in the Chapel of Our Lady of Dolors, and to which Pius IX. has attached an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines, to be gained by all those who recite before it seven "Aves." Father Bernard established the custom of solemnly celebrating seven

\* This chaplet is composed of seven parts, forming each a "Pater" and seven "Ave Marias." The popes have enriched it with numberless indulgences.

Sundays in honor of the Seven Dolors, and founded a perpetual Mass, to be sung on each of these Sundays.

His Holiness deigned to grant a plenary indulgence to all those who would piously consecrate these seven Sundays to the honor of Mary. Since then this salutary devotion has become so familiar to the inhabitants of Wittem and of its environs that the majority of those who visit the convent church go to prostrate themselves before the *Pietà* erected by Father Bernard. Many sad hearts have found consolation at the feet of this holy image; many sinners have been deeply moved and urged to return to God. Even a miraculous cure is said to have been effected there.

The Immaculate Conception of Mary had an ardent and a learned defender in Saint Alphon-sus. As a proof of this see his admirable sermon and his theological dissertations on this subject; see also his vindication of those who had taken a vow to defend this great privilege, and to give, if necessary, their lives for Mary, conceived without sin.

Father Bernard had taken this vow a long time

before the declaration of the dogma. When, in 1844, the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners was canonically established in Wittem, Father Bernard was charged by the rector of the convent to preach the sermons during the octave; he acquitted himself of this beautiful task with so much zeal, talent, and success that over four thousand persons were enrolled in the new confraternity, and in the succeeding years the devotion towards the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God was gradually spread to the neighboring villages. Saint Alphonsus recommended the daily recitation, morning and night, of three "Aves," to be said prostrate, or at least kneeling, adding after each "Ave" this short invocation: "By thy pure and immaculate conception, O Mary! make my body pure and my soul holy." Father Bernard faithfully practised this devotion, and he made it a duty to teach it to his hearers on the missions, and to his penitents.

Saint Alphonsus placed all his actions under the protection of the Queen of Heaven, and termed "blessed" the action that was enclosed

between two "Aves." Hence the custom of his spiritual family never to begin or finish any action without having addressed a prayer to Mary. When there was question of any important undertaking, his supplications became more ardent. He also desired the Redemptorist missionaries to recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the antiphon "Sancta Maria, succurre miseris," the prayer "Defende," and other prayers in her honor, as they approached the place where the mission was to be given. I need not say that our missionary fulfilled to the letter all the desires of his blessed father. He went even further. In his Manual of piety was found a long Latin prayer, written with his own hand, and probably composed by himself. The title of it is, "Prayer to the Mother of the Divine Pastor,\* to be recited by the fathers in the visit to

\* The feast of the Mother of the Divine Pastor is one of the special feasts of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. We read in the morning office of September 2: "Hanc autem boni Pastoris nostri Jesu Christi dulcissimam Matrem, ipsum inter ac nos, populum ejus et oves pascuæ ejus, potentissimam Mediatrix, Pius VIII. Pontifex Maximus sacerdotibus Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris, ut sacrarum

the Blessed Virgin during the course of a mission." I will give a translation of it here for the edification of both the clergy and the faithful in general:

"Hail, O Mother of the Divine Pastor! O thou who art, after Jesus, my hope and my salvation! I come to prostrate myself at thy feet. Permit me, I beseech thee, to rest here a moment from my labors, and to entreat for this congregation and for myself great and new favors from thee. I believe that Jesus Christ, thy Son, is the pastor of these sheep, for whom he has willed to shed his blood and suffered the torment of the cross. I also believe that the price of this blood has been given to thee, and that no one perishes if thou deignest to regard him with mercy. I hear Saint Bernard assure me that it has never been known that any one who implored thy clemency was ever rejected by thee. I hear Saint Alphonsus exclaim that no one is saved except through thy intercession. O my good Mother! hear, then, the

*Missionum a se obeundarum singularem patronam, peculiari officio et missa tertio nonas Septembris quotannis celebrare permisit."*

humble prayer that I now offer to thee for myself and for this congregation. If I have found grace with thee, save me and save those for whom I pray. They are thy children, but thou hast given them to me ; they are thy children, for thou lovest them as a tender mother loves her children. For their salvation thou hast not even spared thine own Son ; thou hast delivered him over to death. But thou hast given them to me, that by my ministry they may be converted, and that, being truly converted, they may love and praise thee and thy Divine Son for all eternity. Bless, then, O good Mother, O refuge of sinners ! and, after Jesus, their only hope ! bless the lost sheep of this parish. . . . May thy gracious hand lead to our feet even those who are the furthest from thee. May none who take part in this spiritual mission be lost, but during these days of salvation may all return by thy mercy to the pastures of Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son. Grant them, as a manifest sign of thy mercy, an abundant source of tears, a contrite and docile heart.

“Look down also upon us, thy servants, to whom Jesus, thy Son, has confided the ministry

of reconciliation. Console us by thy favors in the midst of the labors that we have undertaken for the glory of thy Son. Strengthen our souls, that our zeal may not relax, but may become more and more fervent. Suffer not that excessive labor so to overwhelm our hearts and our thoughts that, forgetting ourselves, we neglect our own salvation and lose our own souls. May each of us persevere in his holy resolutions. May each of us reflect seriously on what he ought to do at this mission, and may he accomplish in deed what he mentally proposed. May we all strive to advance in perfection, and, by the practice of meditation and fervent, ejaculatory prayer, be united with God. May each one place a guard over his heart, and make a compact with his eyes, that his thoughts may remain chaste. May he be preserved free from the contagion of the world. Thus, full of merits, and having become dear to thy beloved Son, we return to our homes, rejoicing in the Lord at the thought that this mission is written in the Book of Life, and has prepared for us a recompense in heaven. Amen." \*

\* Appendix J.

The same Manual contains another testimony of the conformity of Father Bernard's sentiments with those of Saint Alphonsus. In a prayer, entitled "Life in Mary," he consecrates all his labors to the Immaculate Virgin.

Father Bernard loved our Lord Jesus Christ and his Divine Mother; he loved the Church, the spouse of Jesus; he loved souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus. His entire life as missionary priest was the summary of this triple love.

He was one of those men of lively faith by whom our Lord was pleased to bring about the salvation of souls. "Powerful in works and in words," he was to many the instrument of eternal salvation. The memory of his virtues, of his self-sacrifices, and of his success is a precious inheritance to his brothers in religion.

## · CHAPTER XV.

### FATHER BERNARD'S LAST ILLNESS AND HOLY DEATH.

THE year 1865 was the last of the life of the zealous missionary. In the beginning of May he went to direct a mission at Saint Trond, whither the fathers had been called by the dean of the district. He asked and obtained leave from his rector to profit by this opportunity to make his annual retreat of ten days in the convent of that city.

It was there that he received a signal grace from heaven in the presentiment of his approaching end.

He was so perfectly convinced that the work of his life had been accomplished that he made a general confession, in order to prepare for the great voyage to eternity. His only desire was to die in the Holy City, where heaven had called him to the Institute of Saint Alphonsus. He consulted his confessor as to whether he could in

conscience ask the permission of the superior-general to go to Rome to prepare himself there for his approaching death.

As Father Bernard desired repose only in so far as the Most Rev. Father Mauron approved of it, his confessor replied that he saw nothing contrary to the will of God in this request.

After this, to remove all scruple, Father Bernard went to Antwerp to consult Father Loo-yaard, in whom he reposed great confidence. The latter, seeing his confrère in good health and in perfect calmness of mind, was struck with the assurance with which he spoke of his approaching death. He endeavored to persuade him that he had yet too much strength to consider himself at the close of his career. He concluded by telling him that he could ask permission to go to Rome on condition that he would submit with perfect indifference to the decision that would be given him. His conscience being quieted by this conformity of opinion of his two confrères, Father Bernard wrote to the Most Rev. Father Mauron, and also informed the Provincial of Holland of the step which he had taken, confiding all to a kind and amiable Providence. He joyfully com-

menced the mission in the city of Saint Trond, which for the last time witnessed the zeal, the activity, and the eloquence of its favorite preacher. The mission being concluded, Father Bernard returned by way of Wittem, where he remained for some days to take a short repose, preserving in the depths of his soul the call of death which God had caused him to hear.

A mission, given in a little parish of the Diocese of Liége, crowned the laborious and fruitful apostolate of our Redemptorist. It was at Montzen, not far from Aix-la-Chapelle, about a league from Thimister, where he had given his first mission.

The first communion of the children had been fixed for the last day of May. The father, having prepared them for the reception of the Holy Eucharist by a touching address, recited aloud the rosary, walking up and down the aisle to maintain order. Wishing to ascend the steps of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, before which the children were kneeling, he tripped against a bench which projected, and, seeing himself about to fall to the left, he instinctively straightened himself to the other side, tearing a sinew of the

knee, and fell helplessly on his back. The people came in haste to his assistance, and placed him on a chair; he continued to say, "Hail Mary, full of grace," as if he had not been in the least inconvenienced by the fall. Soon, however, the pain became so intense that by his request he was taken to the pastor's residence opposite the church.

Not being able to write himself, he dictated a letter to his family, informing them of his accident, to which he signed his name. "May the holy and adorable will of God be done!" were the concluding words. "The will of God must be accepted without reserve"; this was his motto. This adorable will had been the rule of his life; it became his shield against the pains of sickness and the agonies of death. The physicians considered his cure as certain, but intimated that it would require much time. The father, without losing his habitual cheerfulness, did not share their opinion; the accident appeared to him a presage of death. On the day after he met with this accident it was announced to him that two fathers had come to visit him. "This is kind of them," he exclaimed; "let them come in im-

mediately, for I have not long to live." He desired to read only ascetical works, to prepare the better for his journey to heaven. When he had gained sufficient strength to be moved in a carriage, he returned to the convent at Wittem. On entering his cell he at first expressed hopes of convalescence, so as not to afflict the community; but soon he was heard to speak only of his approaching end, as if he felt the work of the disease that was beginning gradually to undermine his constitution.

There had not yet appeared the slightest symptoms of danger,\* when, on the 21st of August, the new rector of Wittem arrived from America.

"So, then, my reverend father, you have come here to bury me," were the words with which Father Bernard welcomed him. A few days before this he was seen, with one of his friends, sitting in the garden near the vault.

"Look at the new addition to the vault," he said to him; "the first crypt to the left is the place awaiting me."

All the while the condition of the invalid sensibly grew better, and God seemed to have heard

the prayers that were daily sent up to heaven for the preservation of the life of the venerated father. For six weeks he had been obliged to remain motionless, with his leg bandaged ; but now he seemed to be recovering, and, by the aid of crutches, he was already able to walk about in the infirmary.

This confinement in a cage was a torture for the active missionary, but he never appeared dejected ; never did a complaint escape his lips, although his pains were intense. In the midst of sufferings, as well as in labors, he sought repose on the cross, in entire resignation to the amiable will of God. Nevertheless, he longed to engage in his accustomed work. The hour for the fulfilment of his desires seemed near at hand, at least to his superiors, and a new campaign was projected. His superiors promised that on the 28th of August he would give the retreat to the Nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer, at Wittem, and then he was to direct the missions at Bois-le-Duc, Zutphen, Arnhem, Utrecht, Harlem, etc.

On learning this good news he said, " I will resume my part in the great combat, provided

there be any breath left me, or in case I am not in the other world." In fact, Father Bernard was the only one in the community who was persuaded that he was at the end of his career. He astonished every one when he spoke of his fall at Montzen as something very serious. "This accident is the answer from Rome," he said, alluding to the request he had made to the most reverend father-general. On another occasion he said: "Our good God must have had particular designs with me in permitting this accident to happen on the last day of the month of Mary, during the recitation of the rosary of Mary, and before the altar of Mary." Contrary to all expectation, his sad presentiment was to be realized. From the beginning of August he began to suffer from asthma, but no one was alarmed. This trouble was thought to be the result of his prolonged rest, and that it would disappear on the resumption of labor. This was the first symptom of the disease which took him from the Congregation and from the Church militant.

The state of his health had already permitted him to celebrate Mass several times in the private oratory. On the 25th of August he was

able to go to the church, and had the consolation of offering the Holy Mysteries in his favorite chapel, at the altar of Our Lady of Dolors. This was his last Mass.

During the Holy Sacrifice he was suddenly attacked with great difficulty in breathing, and could scarcely finish his Mass. Returning to the sacristy, he sank into a chair, and, having been conducted to the infirmary, he said, on entering, "Ah! it is the second time I have come here; but it will not be long before you will *carry me out*." It was evident that the thought of death never left him.

This time his illness was attended by alarming symptoms. The physician, who was called without delay, declared that dropsy had attacked the right lung. All hope, however, was not lost, since respiration was not obstructed in his left lung; but it was feared that the fatal fluid would encroach on the pericardium. Respiration became perceptibly more difficult, and at the end of three days his condition was so alarming that the patient himself considered his end very near.

Upon learning of Father Bernard's danger the Provincial of England, who happened to be at

Aix-la-Chapelle, went to visit him. Father Bernard remarked to him: "They laugh at me; they still speak to me of cures, but I know better; I am certain that I am going to heaven." Feeling his condition grow worse, he earnestly asked for the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction; and the superiors, having been apprised by the physicians that there was no longer any room for hope, resolved to satisfy his desire.

The last rites were administered to him on August 27, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Mary. All the members of the community assembled in the infirmary and in the adjacent corridor, as many as could kneeling around the chair in which the dear father was seated. When he heard the priest coming with the Blessed Sacrament, he exclaimed, with that love and that lively faith which had ever characterized him, "*Come! come! O my Jesus! come.*" At the sight of his Eucharistic God, he extended his arms and joyfully exclaimed: "*Behold him! behold him!*"

At the conclusion of the ceremony, he took his mission cross, his rosary, and his book of

rules, and raised them as high as his shoulder. Then, breathing very heavily, and frequently pausing, he said: "My brothers, my brothers! behold the crucifix which has assisted me to convert so many unbelievers and poor sinners; the crucifix with which I have so often announced the mercy of God and the hope of pardon. Oh! how much I love it. . . . To have lived in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, to be able to die in it, what joy, what happiness! . . . My conscience tells me that I never resisted the will of God nor the desires of my superiors. . . . If I have addressed a harsh word to the least of my brothers . . . I am entirely resigned to what God wishes. Does he will that I should still work? . . . I am ready for work! . . . Does he will to take me from you? Ah! well, to that also I submit; for, dear brothers, I am sure of my salvation. . . . Soon I will be no more. Yes, beloved brothers, I am going to die. I have known it since my last retreat. . . . I am going to paradise. . . . But be consoled, and redouble your prayers for me; there above I will not forget you."

This address lasted for almost a quarter of an hour; the father made it with an energy which far surpassed what his natural strength would have permitted. It was his last sermon.

On Monday and Tuesday he had intervals of alternate hope and fear; however, the strength of the patient was perceptibly failing. He was attacked with such violent and frequent spells of suffocation that the doors and windows had to be thrown open. He could not endure the least covering on his chest. When on the threshold of eternity, he expressed the desire to renew his vows. The candles were lighted and the missal opened. The Very Rev. Father Konings, the provincial, began to read the formula aloud:

“Ego (I) Bernardus Josephus Hafkenscheid . . . ” The patient said in a weak voice:

“Once more, if you please, father; such things should be said energetically.”

When these words were again pronounced, the dear patient repeated them in as loud a voice as possible.

“Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris” (of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer), continued the provincial.

“Yes,” Father Bernard at once said, becoming animated and striking his breast. “Redemptorist! Yes, I am a Redemptorist with all my heart and all my soul. I have lived as a Redemptorist; as a Redemptorist I will die.” His countenance betrayed a holy transport. The assistants could not control their emotion, and the provincial himself could scarcely continue. At the words, “I renew the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience,” he touched each time the Gospel of the Mass of Saint Alphonsus. The ceremony being concluded, he tranquilly said: “All is well. There now remains but to be said, ‘*Profiscere*’—depart, Christian soul, out of this world.”

In the evening of the same day the students approached his bed of suffering to receive a last advice and his last blessing. Raising his eyes and his hands to heaven, he said to them but these few words: “We will meet again in heaven. There, be assured, I will pray much for you, that you may remain faithful to your vocation.”

At another time the patient said to one of the fathers: “Oh! our good God has ever shown

me such great mercy. He still manifests it. I enjoy profound peace. I have not the least temptation, not the least trouble of mind."

The father remarked: "You have so often said: 'Mother of God, pray for me, a poor sinner, at the hour of my death.'"

"Yes," said Father Bernard; "the Mother of God cannot forget that."

To one of his relations who visited him he said: "It is very singular how the world recedes from us. I no longer think of anything. I have no more regret at not being any longer able to give missions—nothing, nothing; all imperceptibly disappears."

During the nights of Wednesday and Thursday his sufferings were more intense than during the preceding nights. In the midst of his sufferings he suddenly exclaimed: "Jesus, my beloved Jesus, come to my assistance! If it is thy will, O my God! Otherwise, not." He longed so much to leave this world that, when his confrères proposed to make a vow to the Blessed Virgin for his cure, he joyfully replied: "Oh! we ought not to do that; I am so well prepared

now. I feel happy, and am willing to die. If, however, you desire it, *fiat!*” It was thought advisable to insist no longer.

The following night his condition remained unaltered. During a painful attack he asked some relief of the father who performed the duties of infirmarian. He brought him the crucifix. The dying man kissed it tenderly, and enquired what time it was.

“The clock has just struck half-past one.”

“It is Saturday, is it not?”

“No, father, it is but Friday.”

“Still another day and night!” In fact, Saturday was to be his last day.

His devotion to the sufferings of Jesus was a great consolation to him during his hours of sleeplessness. He confided to one of his friends that he had passed the night in making in spirit the “Way of the Cross.” Another time he smiled when the Father Rector came early in the morning to enquire after the state of his health. He seemed to say to him: “Do not pity me; for a night passed without sleep, as mine was, is not to be thought little of.” In fact, he sanctified his sleeplessness and suffering in constant

union with the Passion of our Saviour, by meditation on the "Way of the Cross."

Until the eve of his death the man of God continued to follow, to the extent of his strength, the spiritual exercises of the community. He desired that, at the proper hour, the points of meditations should be read to him, that he should be reminded of the recitation of the Angelus, etc. On Friday his mind began to wander. In a moment of delirium he spoke unceasingly of a distant voyage, and seemed much troubled.

"Father Bernard," said the provincial, "you have always obeyed promptly; obey once more, and speak no longer of that voyage." From that moment the serenity of his mind returned, and never again forsook him.

Towards evening the patient seemed to be in his last agony. The convent bell was rung, the wax candles were lighted in the chamber of death, and the community commenced to recite aloud the prayers for the soul departing. The father joined in the prayers with those who surrounded him, and answered to the invocations of the Litany as distinctly as possible. They inter-

rupted the prayers for a moment, so as not to fatigue him too much; but he requested them to continue, suggesting to the priest the word with which he was to resume. "How beautiful are all these prayers!" he said. "I thank you."

During the night he seemed to be continually absorbed in the contemplation of heavenly things; at times he struck his breast in pronouncing the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. He had no longer strength to articulate distinctly; his lips and his tongue, parched with the fever, had to be refreshed by means of a feather. In the midst of the agonies of death he did not lose the use of his reason; and when, towards the dawn of day, his confessor asked him if he desired to receive absolution and the plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*, he replied by a look of joy, and made the sign of the cross, as if in the pulpit. Absolution was repeated in the same manner about eight o'clock.

His agony then began. He was still heard to whisper: "Jesus, Mary!" These were his last audible words. The prayers for the dying were again said. While a confrère held in his failing hand the blessed candle, he began to breathe

very heavily; his face was covered with a cold sweat, his hands grew frigid, he heaved a deep sigh, and his eyes closed in death.

The soul of Father Bernard left this world to receive the palm promised to the faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. It was Saturday, September 2, 1865, about nine o'clock in the morning. *real 58*

Thus died the apostolic priest; thus die the predestined.

“Happy are they,” exclaims St. Vincent de Paul, “who at the hour of their death see accomplished in them these beautiful words of our Lord: ‘Evangelizare pauperibus misit me Dominus’ (‘to preach the Gospel to the poor the Lord hath sent me’).” They were fulfilled in him whose apostolate we have sketched.

Bernard Joseph Hafkenscheid had attained the age of fifty-eight years, thirty-three of which he had passed in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and thirty-one in the work of the missions. At the time of his death he was still in full possession of his mighty powers and at the height of his reputation.

His death occurred on a very beautiful feast. On the 2d of September the Redemptorists

say the first vespers of the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of the Divine Pastor, whom Pope Pius VIII. gave as an especial patroness to the priests of the Institute of Saint Alphonsus for the work of their missions. Father Bernard, who, during his long missionary career, had not allowed himself a day nor an hour's repose, could present himself before the Sovereign Judge under the protection of Mary, and say with confidence to Jesus: "Amiable Pastor, thou hast given thy life for thy sheep, and in dying upon the cross hast recommended us, who are the sheep of thy fold on earth, to thy most holy Mother. I have walked under thy pastoral crook, and hope that thou wilt now deign to admit me to the pastures of life eternal." \*

On the 4th of September, after the final service had taken place in the church, the deceased was carried to his last resting-place by the pro-

\* Prayer of the Church on the Feast of the Holy Virgin, Mother of the Divine Pastor: "Domine Jesu -Christe, Pastor bone, qui pro ovibus tuis animam dedisti, nosque populum tuum et oves pascuæ tuæ in Cruce pendens Matri Virgini commendasti; ipsa interveniente concede, ut te Pastorem nostrum sequentes in terris, ad pascua æternæ vitæ perducamur in cœlis."

vincials of England, of the Netherlands, and of Belgium. They formed with the fathers, the students, and the brothers of Wittem, with the members of his family and some friends, an imposing cortége, but marked with that simplicity which becomes religious poverty. The absolutions having been concluded, the body was deposited in the crypt that Father Bernard had pointed out in the beginning of his illness. There it reposes in peace, awaiting the day of general resurrection to share the glory of that soul whose labors and sufferings it shared here below.

On the mortuary tablet of Father Bernard are placed these words, taken from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, which are recited in the Mass of Saint Alphonsus: "He was directed by God unto the repentance of the nation, and he took away the abomination of wickedness, and in the days of sinners he strengthened godliness." We read also these words of the Prophet King: "I have declared thy truth and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy mercy and thy truth from the great council. Withhold not thou, O Lord! thy tender mercies from me." Great les-

sons of a life imbued with one thought, *the will of God*, and one sole ambition, *the greater glory of God!* It finished, as it had commenced, in obedience, in resignation, in self-sacrifice. It would not be just to allow the memory of such beautiful examples to perish.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE WORK OF THE MISSIONS.

I HAVE briefly sketched the life of a religious whom many of my readers have seen at work, whose powerful zeal they have admired, and by whose virtues they have been edified. The reverend clergy who have known this valiant soldier of the Church will find that this sketch gives but an imperfect account of the labors which he performed for more than thirty years for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Father Bernard was indeed an eminent member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, but he was not the only one, nor was he the most eminent. In his apostolic career he had holy predecessors who had prepared for him the way; illustrious contemporaries who were his superiors and worked at his side; and succeſ-

sors still living whose exalted position forbids me to name them. His labors form, after all, but a chapter in a history already fruitful of good works and in names for ever blessed. In writing the life of one of its members I have described the apostolate of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

It will not be considered out of place to close this biography by some observations on the work which was at the same time his passion and his merit before God and men.

Saint Alphonsus de Liguori announced the truths of faith and the duties of religion, not only in great cities, but also gave missions to the herdsmen and the artisans of the dioceses of Scala, Amalfi, etc. He desired that the members of his Congregation should devote themselves especially to the evangelization of the poor in country places, without, however, neglecting the inhabitants of the cities, nor even the ecclesiastics. "The principal end of the religious Congregation of which he was the founder was to labor, by preaching and example, at the reformation of morals, particularly among the poor, who are scattered throughout the country." This

Congregation was in a short time propagated in a marvellous manner, and Benedict XIV. confirmed it by his apostolic authority; and the same pontiff having appointed him (Saint Alphonsus) rector major, he excited his companions by his example, and animated them to the practice of every virtue, in a manner truly wonderful.\* His Congregation has spread beyond Italy, and even to the New World; his spiritual children have walked in the footsteps of their saintly father in all countries where the public power has not prevented the establishment of colonies and the good that they desired to effect.

Saint Alphonsus accomplished in the latter part of the eighteenth century what Saint Vincent de Paul had effected in the first part of the century preceding, and was guided by the same supernatural motives. The principle of their establishment was "faith working by charity"—the most compassionate love towards man, inspired by the most lively faith in Jesus Christ.

It was the conviction of these two saints that the missions given to the faithful were sources

\* Bull of the Canonization of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Pope Gregory XVI., May 27, 1839.

the most fruitful for the well-being of society and for the glory of religion—one of the greatest means of salvation that it pleased God to reserve for these latter times. It was to save souls by the ministry of simple and popular preaching that the one gave to the Church the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, commonly called Lazarists, and the other that of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Of both it may be truly said: “He is dead, but his faith still works prodigies by the mouth of his children” — *Per illam defunctus adhuc loquitur.*

Let it not be said that the missionaries should confine themselves to the evangelization of the heathen; the annals of the Church and daily experience attest that Christians also stand in need of their zealous labors.

History proves, on the one hand, that in the very bosom of Christianity circumstances frequently demand the extraordinary assistance furnished to the Church by the apostolate of missionaries. On the other, experience clearly demonstrates that there are always in Christian populations necessities that render the missions

extremely desirable and even morally necessary to many.

Without speaking of the early ages of Christianity, the heresies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found valiant adversaries in Saints Bernard, Norbert, Francis of Assisi, and Dominic, fathers of the many apostolic families that were spread throughout Europe. It was also by the assistance of missions that Charles Borromeo, Ignatius of Loyola, Philip Neri; Francis of Sales, Vincent of Paul, Leonard of Port-Maurice, Bossuet, Fénelon, Rauzan, recalled thousands of souls to the faith, or revived the religious life among the various European nations. Have the wants of Christians diminished since their times? Do incredulity and indifference make less ravages to-day? Has not the diabolical sect of the Jansenists left its footprints, and can we not see that the great Bishop of Saint Agatha of the Goths was providentially sent to combat against the coldness of these latter times, by enkindling in souls the smothered flame of piety? The thought uppermost in his mind was that of the missions; this work was, to use the expression of St. Vincent de Paul, "the capital

*& "bonum bonum"*

*ind. day P<sup>r</sup> but so*

*ind. day P<sup>r</sup> but so*

of his Congregation." History proves that the Holy Ghost, who unceasingly guides the Church, ever supplies remedies for existing wants, and places spiritual missions among the great means of salvation that he procures for even the poorest and most ignorant souls.

Let us add to this every-day experience. If priests and the religious of both sexes who are devoted by their state to the most holy duties feel the necessity of retreats, the need of reflecting from time to time on the love of duty and the sacrifices which it exacts, it must be acknowledged that this same necessity exists, for far more powerful reasons, for the faithful living in the world. Where is the workman, the merchant, the tradesman, the magistrate, the soldier, who has not felt his prejudices vanish, and who was not reanimated with zeal, who has not blessed God, after having followed, with the necessary dispositions, the exercises of a mission? Where is the man, entangled in the cares of life, who after these exercises has not felt more enlightened in eternal truths, more resolved on the faithful observance of his duties, more penetrated with the great motives which cause him

to act and suffer with patience, love, and joy? "The word of God is living, efficacious, and it penetrates deeper than a two-edged sword," says the apostle. The assemblage of great truths that the missionaries proclaim with all the simplicity and strength of the evangelical ministry cannot fail to produce these salutary effects, on the sole condition that divine grace is not obstinately opposed.\*

But what is the nature of a popular mission? What is its end?

A popular mission consists, as is generally known, in a series of sermons, meditations, and pious exercises, directed for a certain number of days by religious or secular priests, for the conversion of sinners and the reanimation of the good.

"It is certain," wrote St. Alphonsus de Liguori to a newly-consecrated bishop, "that the conversion of sinners is the greatest gift that God grants to the people. St. Thomas says that the gift of grace by which God justifies the sinner is

\* From page 177 I have but given in short the reflections of the Most Rev. Victor Dechamps, at present Archbishop of Mechlin: *La grande pensée de St. Vincent de Paul*, chapter iv.

*Missions ? idem*

a greater favor than if he gave him the beatitude of glory. Now, the conversion of sinners is precisely the end of missions. Sinners learn to know the malice of sin, the importance of their salvation, and the goodness of God; and thus their hearts are changed, they abandon their evil ways, and commence to lead Christian lives. In fine, wherever faith has been planted or revived, wherever morals have been reformed, the good has been accomplished by the missionary.” \*

The exercises of a mission tend to excite sentiments of repentance and to form resolutions to lead a better life. The eloquence employed in the sermons and instructions is simple and popular.

Together with subjects which excite terror, as the four last things, the crimes of blasphemy, impiety, sacrilege, etc., the missionaries speak of the mercy of God, the means of salvation offered by the Church, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, of confidence in the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of final perseverance.

\* *Istruzione ai Predicatori*, S. Alfonso, p. 69, vol. x. See also *Manuel du Missionnaire*, by Father Nampon, S.J., and App. I.

Eternity cries out, as it were, to force the sinner to know himself, to repent, to reveal all the secrets of his conscience to a priest whom perhaps he has never seen before, and perhaps will never see again; who will speak to him in the confessional words of reconciliation and of encouragement; who will teach him the means of satisfying the divine justice, and of leading a new life. The mission generally concludes by the renewal of the baptismal vows, the consecration of the parish to the Blessed Virgin, the act of reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, the solemn planting of the cross or the erection of the stations, the imparting of the plenary indulgence, the celebration of the Mass for the souls of the faithful departed, for parents, etc., and for the faithful that are present.

Thus the few days occupied in a mission, with all the truths that it announces, all the works that it realizes and advises, become a source of benediction to souls that wish to profit by them. It is a work of instruction and of conversion, which undeceives those who try to deceive themselves, convinces those who are in doubt, reanimates the indifferent, and recalls the hardened sinner. It

is an extraordinary means that attacks falsehood and error directly, boldly, and perseveringly; that overthrows them, and triumphantly rears truth on their ruins. Inveterate habits, old prejudices, when they are combated by isolated sermons, always find some corner in the heart where they are concealed and nourished; but in the course of a mission the hearer is forcibly reminded, day after day, of the enormity of his crimes and the consequences of his blindness, and can no longer conceal from himself his wretched state. Null marriages are validated; ill-gotten goods are restored; sinful habits and criminal connections are broken off; feuds are appeased, injuries are forgiven, and lawsuits are settled; peace returns to families; and the general aspect of parishes and countries is improved. Where incredulity, immorality, dissension, revolt, and insubordination reigned, the serenity of faith and good morals, union, love, obedience, and Christian peace, are established. Husband and wife are strengthened in their love and fidelity, and sanctify their state; parents learn to govern their households in a Christian manner; children to obey, respect, and love their

parents ; servants, laborers, young men, those in authority, all learn to practise conscientiously and courageously that which for a long time they observed with lukewarmness, or had completely forgotten.

We do not mean to say that parochial missions have everywhere and always an immediate and lasting efficacy, but their usefulness cannot be denied, nor even their necessity in bringing back to the path of truth and virtue those who have strayed from it. Times remarkably evil, as are those in which we live, demand extraordinary remedies. That faith and the Christian life may replace impiety and vice, it is not sufficient that the parochial clergy appeal constantly to the people, and guide them by their daily teachings and example ; but it is necessary that a priest who has voluntarily devoted himself to the salvation of all Christians should use extraordinary means with all classes of society, and particularly with those who are most ignorant in matters of religion, in order to enlighten, move, console them ; to wound them, if necessary, and then heal them by the wound itself. This is, in the order of Providence, one of the most efficacious means to

establish everywhere the kingdom of Jesus Christ, so violently attacked in our days, the ruin of which would infallibly cause also that of the entire social edifice.

Such is the task of the missionary priest.

“ Let great intellects dispute as much as they like on the wounds of society, they cannot heal them without the assistance of good men who know not how to speak so brilliantly, but who know how to act and suffer, because they believe in Jesus Christ, and obtain from him strength different from that which is employed in books and in courts of justice. The unfortunate always stand in need of the missionary to assist and console them in their bodily sufferings, and communicate to the ignorant, to the guilty, and to the people in general the powerful aids of the moral and spiritual life.” \*

Experience has already too clearly demonstrated that the elevated theories of the journalist, the mere ordinances of the police, the best regulations of the civil administration, are altogether inadequate for the moral improvement of the

\* Mgr. Dechamps, *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Misérables*, chapter vii.

people and for the relief of their miseries. The Church alone can reform and restore peace to society, by calling torpid souls to a sense of the Christianity of the Church, which alone can rule the rich as the poor, those who govern as well as those who are governed. The missionaries—we may well say the messengers of salvation to parishes—are, in this respect, the foremost and indispensable workers of the Church; their aim is eminently and Christianly popular; their concurrence is even more necessary in those fields where tares have been sown by the disseminators of evil.

In a word, to the tumultuous gatherings of impiety should be opposed the pacific assemblies of religion; at intervals the people should be profoundly moved by the voice of the ministers of God and the dispensers of his mysteries.

It matters but little whether this apostolate is exercised by secular priests or by those belonging to a religious community; the principal object is to preach Jesus Christ, and to restore to him souls redeemed at the price of his precious blood: “*Dummodo prædicetur Christus.*”

The secular priests who have been trained in our diocesan seminaries know the spirit of devotedness and of sacrifice that this part of the apostolate requires, and more than once have they united to manifest their zeal in the diocesan missions given in the cities and in country places.\* But it must also be acknowledged that the greater part are devoted to the ordinary works of the holy ministry in the parishes, or to the education of youth in colleges. From this point of view it may be said in all truth that the secular clergy are of themselves insufficient to accomplish this work. The Church has wisely provided for this insufficiency in forming assistant-soldiers, who combat under the banner of a common discipline, and who can devote themselves entirely to this noble cause. To-day, as heretofore, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Jesuits, the Lazarists, and the Redemptorists render invaluable service to re-

\* Mgr. Van Hemel, Vicar-General of Cardinal Sterckx, gives an account, in his *Précis de Rhétorique Sacrée*, of the zealous labors of several curés of the Diocese of Mechlin after the Revolution of 1830. The same may be said of the clergy of other dioceses of Belgium.

ligion and to the Church. Intellectually and morally prepared, by a particular education, for the work of the missions, they are especially devoted to heal sick and guilty souls, and to renew the spirit of piety and repentance, not only by their example, but also by their teachings. The great Pius IX., in his beautiful encyclical of the 17th of June, 1847, calls the religious orders "the choice phalanx of the army of Jesus Christ, the auxiliary forces which have always been the ornament and the bulwark of Christianity and the state." \*

Not to avail one's self of their devotedness, when the enemy is always advancing, is to show that neither Jesus Christ nor souls are loved as they should be. But what Belgian bishop has not appealed to their zeal? And what pastor worthy of the name would not procure for his flock the benefits of a mission?

\* *Lectissimas illas auxiliares Christi militum turmas quæ maximo tum Christianæ, tum civili reipublicæ usui, ornamēto atque præsidio semper fuerunt.*



## APPENDIX.

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### A.

*Testimony given to Father Bernard by the Rector  
of the Roman College (page 44).*

Testor ego qui infra, R. D. Hafkenscheid, Bernardum Joseph, patre Michaele, patria Amstelodamensem, a die 8 novembris 1828 usque ad hanc diem fere per annos quatuor in hoc Collegio Romano Societatis Jesu studia theologiae dogmaticae absolvisse, scilicet annis quatuor theologiae dogmaticae, duobus annis theologiae moralis, sacrae Scripturae et historiae ecclesiasticae, anno uno linguae hebraicae: qui *V. Ram*  
in omnibus iis summae diligentiae et maximi profectus certissima semper documenta dedit, adeo ut pauci cum ipso comparari potuerint; iis vero quae ad pietatem, religionem et modestiam pertinent, sic semper satisfacisse, ut caeteris

exemplo fuerit, et sibi maximam laudem comparaverit : quocirca in solemni praemiorum distributione, sub anni exitum, et praemio coonestatum, et anno 1830 ad baccalaureatus, anno 1831 ad prolytatus, anno tandem 1832, mense aprili, ad doctoratus gradus plenissimis suffragiis promotum fuisse.

Ex Collegio Romano Societatis Jesu, die 23 aprilis 1832.

J. BAPTISTA DOSSI, S.J.,

*Rector Collegii Romani.*

[Sigillum S.J.]

## B.

*Explanation of a passage in the Letter of the Very Rev. Father Passerat (page 52).*

Since the Church has granted to all liberty of opinion in doubtful matters, the reader will perhaps be astonished to see the Very Rev. Vicar-General exact of Father Bernard perfect indifference of opinion on all subjects which do not pertain to faith. I therefore deem it expedient to give a few words of explanation.

In a letter, dated at Nocera in 1749, Saint Alphonsus wrote to the rector of the house of Ciorani: "As to the scholastic questions touching the sacraments, I do not wish opinions to be taught which are contrary to those that we hold in moral theology. I speak of primary questions; for example, attrition, the minister of marriage, and also of the intention that the minister should have to do that which the Church does, etc. In these questions, and others of the same kind, I desire you to follow and maintain, as far as possible, the common opinions and those that I have taught myself in moral theology. Should the professor hold a contrary opinion, let him keep it to himself; he should, moreover, practise obedience. . . . The common opinions are generally the most probable, and when we follow these we cannot be criticised." \*

We here see that the holy and learned founder requires the professors to teach the common opinions on all primary questions.

Father Passerat was too faithful a son of

\* *Œuvres complètes de Saint Alphonse*, traduction du P. Dujardin, vol. xii. p. 203.

Saint Alphonsus to ask an arbitrary submission that was not demanded by the saint himself. But, in writing to Father Hafkenscheid, he had a particular reason to require, in advance, a perfect indifference concerning all opinions that did not regard faith. At that time Professor Günther taught at Vienna a philosophical doctrine which appeared very dangerous to Father Passerat, and which, at a later period, was condemned by Pius IX. The system of the Viennese doctor had many followers among the younger clergy. From this system the vicar-general wished to preserve the members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Not yet personally knowing the young doctor of theology, who applied to him for admission, he was right in putting him to the test beforehand by exacting submission to the superiors on all opinions that entered not into the domain of faith.

## C.

*The Convent at Wittem (Page 63).--Father Bernard in the Netherlands (Page 85).*

The convent at Wittem, situated in Limburg, between Maestricht and Aix-la-Chapelle, was the fourth community founded by the Redemptorists in Belgium. For a long time they felt the necessity of having a separate house for the students of the Congregation, the Novitiate of Saint-Trond being too small to accommodate them. They therefore purchased the ancient convent of the Capuchins at Wittem, near Galoppe, where the fathers had given their first mission.\* The establishment of the Red community at Wittem took place on the 12th of January, 1836, under the auspices of Father Czvitkovicz. In the beginning the new convent

\* This convent was built by the Count of Plettenberg the same year (1732) that Saint Alphonsus founded his Congregation at Scala. During the French Revolution it passed into the hands of seculars, and was only restored to its religious purpose on its purchase by the Redemptorists in December, 1835.

was to be considered a house of studies ; but the people for miles around congregated there to go to confession and to hear the word of God, giving it the appearance of a continual mission.

That part of Limburg in which the house of Wittem is situated was detached from Belgium in virtue of the treaty of the Twenty-Four Articles. This was a dispensation of an amiable Providence, as the Congregation was thus placed under the sceptre of the King of the Netherlands.\*

But this situation became, at the same time, dangerous for the convent at Wittem, and the religious could not conceal their apprehensions. Until then the Netherlands government did not permit any ancient community to receive novices, and it was feared that it would not be less intolerant with regard to a congregation of recent creation.

King William I., fearing to displease the Catholics of his kingdom, did not take any measures contrary to the interests of the religious institutes founded since 1830. In 1840 he abdi-

\* Wittem has formed, since then, a part of the Diocese of Ruremonde.

cated the crown in favor of his son, William II. The latter, acting from motives of justice towards his Catholic subjects, granted them, among other rights, that of religious associations and of the Catholic apostolate. The convent at Wittem was even recognized in an especial manner, thanks to the intervention of Gregory XVI., as William II. declared at his visit to Limburg. During the royal visit that he made to the convent, June 18, 1840, he said to the fathers: "It appears that you are the Benjamins of the Pope; for he has particularly recommended your convent to me." On observing Father Bernard near him he said: "Here is the man who accomplishes more good with regard to morals than our army has been able to do evil." \* His majesty entered his name on the list of the benefactors and protectors of the house.

The legal existence which the Protestant king

\* It must be remembered that from 1830 to 1839 Northern Brabant had a standing army of from 80,000 to 100,000 men. Two-thirds of this army were Protestants; three-fourths were unmarried. The moral condition of such troops may easily be imagined. There is no exaggeration in saying that Father Bernard was the man sent by Providence to reform their morals by his preaching.

granted to the Redemptorists at Wittem gave him a claim to the gratitude of the community. Rev. Father de Held accordingly sent Father Bernard to the Hague, at the close of the year 1840, to express to his majesty the sentiments of their gratitude. On this occasion Father Bernard preached in many churches of the Hague and of Amsterdam, and God gave abundant blessings to his zeal. His presence in these large cities drew the attention of the public to the Congregation, and soon after several priests of the Hague, Amsterdam, and Leyden sought for admission into the family of St. Alphonsus.

From this time Father Bernard commenced the work of the missions in Northern Brabant and in Limburg. He also gave retreats to the seminarians, and by his zeal induced several priests to join him in his labors. From the year 1842 their number became so great that it was evident the hand of God guided these new evangelical labors.

In 1848 the Redemptorists established two new communities in the kingdom of the Netherlands. Towards the close of the year 1855 the new province of Holland was established.

Father Looyard, a native of the Diocese of Harlem, sent me an interesting letter regarding these matters, a portion of which I here insert:

“ You know the condition of the Catholic Church in our provinces from the beginning of the intolerant Reformation until the close of the last century. It must be acknowledged that the Revolution, with its motto of liberty and equality, has been advantageous to Catholics; but after more than two hundred years of persecution, we find ourselves in a state of inferiority and, we may even say, of prostration before the followers of Calvin and Luther. This is felt even in religious discussion in so far as we generally confine ourselves to the defensive with regard to our erring brethren.

“ Since 1842 the Redemptorists conducted the annual retreats given to the clergy in that portion of the *Holland Mission* which now forms our diocese.

“ Before his departure for America, and after his return from Ireland, the incomparable Father Bernard nearly always conducted these holy exercises.

“ During one of the first retreats he had an

interview with Professor Broere, the principal editor of the review *De Katholiek*. He called his attention to the style of religious controversy then in vogue. 'It betrays weakness,' he said to him, 'to confine ourselves to the defensive. We are children of the Church and of the truth; our adversaries are heretics or unbelievers; it is, then, our duty to take the offensive, and to expose to the public the erroneous doctrines of Protestantism and of impiety.'

"M. Broere and his learned associates, Van Vree, Wennekendonck, and others, profited by this observation. Of this we have sufficient proof in many articles of the *Katholiek*, in which the writings of Protestants are attacked with wonderful vigor, erudition, and logic, and to which our adversaries have never attempted to reply."

*Missions of the Redemptorists in Holland (page 87).*

We find in the *Journal Historique et Littéraire* of M. Kersten, tom. x. page 449 *et seq.* (January, 1844), these observations:

Since the royal approbation, granted towards the close of 1840, to the fathers of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Holland, and for the free exercise of the missions in this country, these indefatigable workers have labored much in this portion of the field of the Church. The two vicariates of Bois-le-Duc and Bréda are the principal fields where they have exercised their zeal with an ever-increasing success. In less than three years more than one hundred thousand souls received through them the benefits of a mission; seventy-five thousand in the vicariate of Bois-le-Duc alone.

The soldiers are not computed in this calculation. The missionaries watered by their sweat eighteen places of this last-named vicariate, and fourteen in that of Bréda. At the request of the late administrator of the district of Grave, Uden was the first place in which the fathers gave a mission. This was in October, 1841. The first mission given in the vicariate of Bois-le-Duc was that of Tilburg, an enterprising city containing twelve thousand Catholics, and which was for a long time the headquarters of the army of Holland. This

mission, which may be considered as the model of all those that followed, took place in the month of February, 1842, and was given in the churches at the same time. The results it produced were so abundant and so permanent that they are still remarked in all classes of society, and especially in that class whose example exercises the greatest influence. From that time all the good that could be expected from missions in Brabant began to be seen, and the lapse of years has served but to confirm these impressions.

As it would take too long to detail the success of each mission in particular, we will give only the general facts, the truth of which has been guaranteed to us; although, being but counterparts of what is repeated in different localities, such guarantee is needless. Faithful to the rules and to the spirit of their order, the fathers remain in each locality at least ten or fifteen days, however small may be the number of the inhabitants, so as to omit none of the most important exercises, and to gather at leisure the fruits of grace.

However cold religious fervor had grown

among the inhabitants, it was always revived towards the end of the mission. The touching ceremonies of the Reparation of Honor to the Blessed Sacrament, the solemn consecration of the parish to the Blessed Virgin, the Papal benediction, were everywhere accompanied with great religious solemnities. The rosary, preceded by an instruction (all according to the spirit of St. Alphonsus), recited with the people by a father from the pulpit, was never omitted, even in the largest cities, as Bréda and Bois-le-duc. This vocal and public prayer evidently draws down the most signal graces on the labors of the missionaries, and wonderful conversions are frequently the result. It is true that circumstances ordinarily prevented the planting of the cross, but it was often supplied by the erection of the stations, to obtain which the curés, in concert with their parishioners, spared no expense. They were often pictures painted on canvas by the best artists of the country, and valued at several thousand florins.

As to the order of the exercises of the mission, it is nearly always the same. The Word of God

is usually preached to the people three times a day, and even four times on Sundays. An instruction is given early in the morning for the working-classes, on the obligations of a Christian and on the manner of preparing for the worthy reception of the sacraments; and, that every one in the parish may profit by these salutary instructions, they are usually repeated in the sermon at the High Mass, especially in villages. In localities where the spiritual needs require it, as in large cities, they never fail to discuss dogmatic truths, in order to strengthen those whose faith is wavering, and to recall the erring to the truth. In the evening they treat of the great truths of religion, in order to awaken sinners from their sleep of death, and to recall tepid souls to the fervor becoming their state. The "Miserere" is then sung, followed by the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

As to the favorable results of the exercises, one may form an idea of them from the faith of a people so attached to their religion, and where all ranks rival each other in doing good. It is a rare exception, even among the nobility,

for one to reject the grace which is offered to all by the mission. We will say nothing of the tears which are so abundantly shed, nor of the sobs that drown the voice of the preacher, and often oblige him to discontinue. We will content ourselves with recalling, in passing, how consoling to religion it is to see so many sincere returns from error to truth, conversions as solid as they are numerous, those inveterate feuds changed into lasting friendship, bad books burnt, scandals repaired, criminal intercourses broken off or legitimized, and considerable restitutions made both to individuals and to the government. It is certainly beautiful to see these parishes entirely freed from abuses in so short a time, and brought back to the spirit of piety, to the frequenting of the sacraments, devoted to prayer, and embracing with holy avidity the means of perseverance. What more imposing sight than that of an entire city, not excepting men of letters and position, and soldiers, being invested with the scapular, or reciting aloud the rosary in honor of the Mother of God! What may not be hoped

for in the future from such a flock? Other means are also employed to perpetuate the good arising from missions. Here is established a library of good books, there confraternities are formed; in other places Confraternities of the Rosary and Scapular are re-established; associations are everywhere formed against blasphemy. In many places such confraternities are formed, at the head of which are found ecclesiastics and the most eminent persons. But what contributes most to confirm the fruits of the exercises is the renewal of the mission—an idea for which we are indebted to the wisdom of Saint Alphonsus, who imposed it as an especial obligation on his children. According to the holy founder, it should take place within six months at most after the mission, but to last for a shorter time, and to be conducted by a smaller number of missionaries. Experience daily proves the importance of these renewals. The good are strengthened; the weak are encouraged to lead good lives; sinners who at first escaped from the mystic net are generally caught at the renewals. These exercises are usually terminated by the renewal of the baptismal

vows—a ceremony well adapted to crown their good resolutions.

Together with this marvellous success, public order and tranquillity are never disturbed in missions, notwithstanding the religious enthusiasm and incredible eagerness of immense crowds to hear the Word of God, which even the influence of the missionaries can scarcely keep within due bounds. From this it may be readily inferred why Mgrs. H. Den Dubbelden, Bishop of Emmaüs, and J. Van Hooydonck, Bishop of Dardania, asked this signal blessing for their respective dioceses. For they not only authorized and openly approved of missions, but they appreciated this means of salvation for their flock so much that they never failed to be present, in person, in the most important places, to close the exercises by a solemn High Mass; not even the great distance of places nor the bad condition of roads prevented them from assisting. When, however, the advanced age of the Bishop of Bois-le-Duc prevented him from gratifying his desirés in this respect, he requested his coadjutor, Mgr. Zwysen, Bishop of Gerra, to take his place on these occasions, to which the worthy prelate most willingly consented.

Considering the beautiful examples given by the ecclesiastical superiors, it is not surprising that the secular clergy without exception not only asked for missions and renewals, but followed the example of their bishops in taking part in these meritorious labors.

The bishop barely intimated his desire, when the curés, to the number of fifteen or twenty, left their parishes to assist the missionaries in the conversion of souls. Rivalling each other in zeal, they sat from morning till night in the sacred tribunal, until the close of the mission. More recently still, at Bois-le-Duc, forty-eight worthy curés, having at their head three venerable deans, came to the spiritual assistance of its immense population. How edifying to see such union between the regular and secular clergy; and above all, how useful is not this to the Church! What Catholic heart will not nourish the sweet hope that the old faith and simplicity of manners, which of old distinguished Northern Brabant, will soon bloom again in a field so well cultivated?

Since we proposed to speak in this sketch only of the more prominent works of the Redemptor-

ist Fathers in Holland, without dwelling on the numerous retreats given by them on various occasions, both in the large and small seminaries, in convents, prisons, hospitals, and similar institutions, we will return to the description of the fruits of the missions.

The comportment of the Catholic soldiers during the exercises, when they took place in large cities where they were garrisoned, as Bréda, Berg-op-Zoom, Grave, Venloo, and Bois-le-Duc, was always worthy of attention and praise.

As soon as the superior of the missions arrived, he made it his duty to call on the civil authorities, as also on the military officers, in order to take measures for the spiritual welfare of those under their command. The day was fixed on which the soldiers were to comply with their religious duties. At the appointed time they marched to the church in a body to the sound of martial music. They there found from ten to fifteen confessors awaiting them. It is impossible to describe the lively and salutary emotion produced by the spectacle of so many soldiers, young and old, all approaching the holy table with that manly piety which becomes them. There

was not one of the superior officers who accompanied them that did not encourage them by example having their beads publicly blessed, reciting them with the people, being invested with the scapular in the presence of all, and following assiduously the exercises of the mission. Father Bernard, often struck by a piety so frank, and the edification that resulted from it, could not refrain from publicly expressing his satisfaction and gratitude.

The sick are also objects of the solicitude of the good missionaries. On the day following the close of the mission, after the Requiem Mass for the deceased of the parish, at which one of the fathers delivers a discourse on the souls in purgatory, they visit the sick, hear their confessions, invest them with the scapular, and impart to them the Papal benediction. If the number of sick be too great, the curés assist the fathers in this charitable work. It would be unjust were we to conclude without bestowing praise on the conduct of the Protestants in general during the course of the missions. They not only did not interfere with the efforts of the missionaries, but on all occasions showed them the greatest respect.

Many of them, even some of the municipal authorities, assisted at the principal exercises, and expressed great satisfaction, acknowledging that the fathers enlightened them without wounding their feelings.

This is a faithful account of the labors of the missionaries of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Holland during the last three years. It is certainly not wanting in interest to all Catholics who have at heart the cause of God and the good of the Church. It will furnish hereafter a beautiful page in the history of this country; for it must not be forgotten that all this has transpired in a Protestant land, where Catholics still meet with great opposition from a certain party that is anything but tolerant. It is true that the missionaries come to the parishes without ostentation, and leave in the same manner, satisfied with having procured the glory of God and the salvation of souls; but we must also remark that from the very beginning they wore the habit of their order. With the mission cross suspended from their necks, and the rosary from their cinctures, they exercised their laborious ministry, and with truly apostolic

freedom preached the truth in all its power. What will be the result of these labors? God alone knows! In the meantime, let us bless the Father of mercies for having bestowed so abundantly his blessing on this people; and we most ardently desire that still other countries may profit by such beautiful examples.

We cannot omit in concluding to say a word in regard to the vicariate of Limburg. Before the cession of the territory, the most important places of that diocese, such as Ruremonde, Venloo, etc., had already received the advantage of a mission. Since the cession the house of Wittem has continued its labors there. Two jubilees were given at Maestricht; a second mission has been given at Venloo, as well as at Sittard; other places also received the same favor, to which the fathers are expected soon to return. Those who know the well-directed zeal of the Bishop of Hirène, Mgr. Paredis, also know the good that may be expected in the future.

## E.

*Rev. Fathers Passerat, De Held, and Dechamps.*

In this biographical notice of Father Bernard frequent mention has been made of Fathers Passerat, De Held, and Dechamps, priests of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. We will devote a few pages to them.

I. Joseph Passerat, born in 1772, at Joinville (Champagne), entered the seminary of Châlons-sur-Marne at the breaking out of the Revolution. Obligated to quit the seminary, and being thrown into prison by the republicans, he obtained his liberty through the influence of some of the nobility who interested themselves in his behalf. On the entry of the Germans into France he was forcibly enrolled into the French army, in which he held the position of drum-major and quartermaster. He effected his escape, and repaired to Trèves, and from thence to Augsburg and Wurzburg, where he devoted himself to the study of ecclesiastical sciences. Hearing of the wonders accomplished in Poland by the Venerable

Clement-Maria Hoffbauer,\* he resolved to depart for Warsaw, where this man of God resided. Having been admitted to the novitiate, he pronounced his vows in 1796, and was ordained priest the following year.

The limits of a note do not permit us to describe in detail the apostolic career of Father Passerat. Suffice it to say that the Most Rev. Father Mansione, rector-major, appointed him vicar-general of the Congregation in the north. From that time Father Passerat resided in Vienna, at the Convent of "Maria-Stiegen." In 1848 he resigned his office, and took up his residence in the convent at Tournay. It was there this extraordinary man, so experienced in the interior life, yielded his soul to God, October 30, 1858, at the age of eighty-six years. He had passed nearly sixty-two years in the Congregation of Saint Alphonsus.

\* Venerable Clement-Maria Hoffbauer, a native of Moravia, died at Vienna in the odor of sanctity, March 15, 1820. See notice of him in the work of Cardinal de Villecourt, *Vie et Institut de Saint Alphonse-Marie de Liguori* (Casterman, Tournay, 1864), vol. iii.; Appendix to book iv.; and in the *Memoires sur la Vie et la Congrégation de Saint Alphonse*, by Father Tannoja (Gaume, Paris, 1842), vol. iii. page 713 seq.

If Father Hoffbauer, says Cardinal Villecourt, had received from God the mission of instilling into the members of the institute the ardent zeal and indefatigable activity of the holy founder, Father Passerat may justly be called the master of the spiritual life, destined to revive more and more, among the Redemptorists, the spirit of prayer.\*

II. Frederick de Held, son of Michael von Held, Chevalier of the Empire, the offspring of a noble family of Vienna, was born at Brunn, July 17, 1799. He was very successful in his studies, which he pursued at the University of Vienna, where the Very Rev. Father Clement-Maria Hoffbauer, vicar-general of the Congregation, resided after having been expelled from Warsaw by the government.

Father Hoffbauer formed at Vienna a circle of the most distinguished Catholics; among others, Frederick de Schlegel, Adam Müller, Frederick Henry Schlosser, Zacharias, Frederick Werner, and Klinkowström.† Some distinguished stu-

\* *Vie et Institut de Saint Alphonse*, vol. iii. page 375.

† Frederick de Schlegel founded, in 1811, the *Oesterreichische Beobachter* (the *Austrian Observer*), in concert with

dents of the university were also admitted. They assembled in the evening at the house of the venerable religious to discuss religious matters, and to consider the stand that Catholics should take in opposition to the pretensions of the government. Young De Held, being admitted into the society of these illustrious men, soon formed a friendship with Father Hoffbauer, and became one of his most fervent disciples.

Father Hoffbauer died, as saintly as he had lived, March 15, 1820. When, on the 30th of April of the same year, the Emperor Francis signed a decree granting to the Congregation a legal existence in the empire, Frederick de Held and other young candidates, already acquainted with the end of the Institute, commenced their novitiate under the direction of Father Martin Starck.\*

Father de Held had attained the age of twenty-two years when he made his religious profes-

another Catholic, Anthony de Pilat, a brother of the pious Redemptorist of that name.

\*The emperor assigned to the community the beautiful church of *Maria-Stiegen*, which Father Hoffbauer considered suitable for his purpose.

sion, August 2, 1821. He was promoted to the priesthood August 21, 1823. He was destined by Providence to contribute in an efficacious manner to the propagation of the work of Saint Alphonsus, and consequently to the organization of spiritual missions in both the city and country.

The reader is no doubt aware that Father Joseph Passerat succeeded Father Clement-Maria Hoffbauer as superior. It was he who thirteen years later (1833) sent Father de Held to Belgium to direct the communities just established in the dioceses of Tournay and Liège. It is no matter of surprise that he won the esteem and affection of Mgr. Corneille van Bommel. "Never," said the pious prelate, "have I met a priest of more energy of character or of more consummate prudence." It is, above all, to the labors of Father de Held and to the protection of the Bishop of Liège that the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer owes its first organization in Belgium.

In 1832 Father de Held repaired to Nocera dei Pagani, where reposed the remains of Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, to assist at the chapter of

the entire Congregation for the election of the superior-general. In 1855 he was of the number of those who received many votes for this exalted position. Rev. Father Nicholas Mauron, Provincial of France, was elected.

Father de Held had been rector of the convent of Liège from the time of its foundation, in 1833, until 1841, and was at the same time the *visitor* of the Belgian houses. At the erection of the Belgian province, July 2, 1841, he was appointed provincial. Father Victor Dechamps became his successor as rector of the convent at Liège.

Father de Held filled the office of provincial until the close of 1847. Under his prudent administration and by his indefatigable zeal the Belgian province was enlarged by the foundations in Holland and England, which afterwards became separate provinces.

In 1864 Father de Held had the consolation of being called to Vienna to assist as witness in the process for the beatification of his master in the spiritual life, the venerable servant of God, Clement-Maria Hoffbauer.

After having resided at Liège, at Clapham

(London), and at Wittem, in the capacity of rector or provincial, Father de Held was for many years attached to the community of Aix-la-Chapelle; the religious persecution which has just broken out in Germany has obliged this venerable religious, now in his seventy-fifth year, to leave his country and taste the bitterness of exile. May God preserve him yet many years, to be the consolation and the father of the religious who are now suffering persecution for the sake of Jesus Christ !

III. Victor Augustus Isidore Dechamps, the descendant of a respectable family of Hainault, was born at Melle (East Flanders), December 6, 1810; he is the third son of Adrian Joseph Dechamps and Alexandrine Josephine de Nuit.

After having finished his literary and philosophical studies under the direction of his father, who was a distinguished pupil of the old Alma Mater, Victor entered the *grand séminaire* of Tournay, towards the end of October, 1832, in order to prepare for the priesthood. In November, 1834, he was sent to Mechlin to continue his theological studies at the Catholic University then recently erected by the Belgian episcopacy.

He was ordained priest at Mechlin, December 20, 1834, by Mgr. Engelbert Sterckx. Who would have thought that on the same date, December 20, 1867, he would be appointed by the Holy See the immediate successor of him who had ordained him? Abbé Dechamps, while yet a student in the episcopal seminary of Tournay, learned to know and love the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; and from that time he felt called by heaven to be a missionary. While studying at the university he obtained the sanction of his bishop to leave the ranks of the secular clergy, and was admitted into the family of Saint Alphonsus Liguori.\*

Having commenced his novitiate at Saint Trond in the autumn of 1835, under the direction of Father Villani, he pronounced his religious vows June 13, 1836, in the hands of Rev. Father de Held.

From this time until January, 1842, Father Victor Dechamps filled in the house of Wittem

\* His eldest brother, Adolphus Dechamps, at present Minister of State, was born in 1806. In the *Nouvelle Eve* he gives an account of his vocation to the ecclesiastical and religious state.

the office of prefect of studies, and gave lessons in Scripture and dogma to his younger brothers in religion. In this studious retreat he ripened his natural talents, and made his first appearance in the pulpit.

From 1842 until the close of 1847 we find him at the head of the Redemptorist Convent at Liége. During this interval he took a most active part in many missions in small villages of the Walloon diocese, and in many large cities of the country. From this period he proved to be not only one of the most eminent preachers of Belgium, but also an able apologist by his writings. At the grand jubilee at Liége, in 1846, he gained great renown.

In January, 1848, he was named Superior of the Convent of Tournay. In this capacity he made his first voyage to Italy. Fathers Heilig, Hugues, and Dechamps were appointed consultants-general of the Congregation, and resided at Nocera for several months. They defended the interests of their order before Ferdinand II., King of Naples, who gave them an audience in the palace of Caserta. At the royal palace of Portici, in the kingdom of Naples, Father De-

champs had, on several occasions, the signal happiness of prostrating himself at the feet of His Holiness Pius IX., and held long communications with him.\* In these interviews, which were intimate, the pious and eloquent Belgian Redemptorist became a favorite son of the great Pope. He afterwards made several pilgrimages to Rome for the welfare of the Congregation.

Father Dechamps had scarcely returned to Belgium when he received an invitation to deliver the funeral oration of Her Majesty Louise Marie Thérèse of Orleans, the first queen of the Belgians, who died a holy death October 11, 1850. On the 24th of the same month the obsequies of the queen were magnificently celebrated in the Church of Saints Michael and Gudula, at Brussels, by Cardinal Sterckx, in the presence of the *corps de l'état*. Father Dechamps, who had many opportunities of seeing and admiring the pious and charitable daughter of Louis Philippe

\* Pius IX., having sought an asylum in Gaëta in November, 1848, went to Portici on the 4th of September, 1849, where he remained about seven months. He triumphantly returned to his capital April 12, 1850, which had been delivered by the French army, July 3, 1849.

and Marie Amélie, pronounced a touching discourse, of which even the first words deeply affected the audience. This masterpiece of Christian eloquence was reproduced by the entire press, and obtained lasting applause throughout Europe.

In 1851 Father Dechamps succeeded the Very Rev. Father Heilig as Provincial of Belgium. Freed, after three years, from the laborious duties which are inseparable from the office of provincial, he was called to resume the rectorship of Tournay.

He passed a great part of the year 1855 in the capital of the Christian world. He acted there as *vocal*, elected by the Chapter of the Province of Belgium to the General Chapter of the Institute of St. Alphonsus.

From the close of 1855 until the commencement of 1859 he resided in the Convent of St. Joseph at Brussels, in the capacity of rector. At his request he was relieved of all direction of the convent, and devoted himself exclusively to preaching, to the direction of souls, and to the completion of his great apologetical writings. Father Dechamps seemed exhausted by the labors of the cell and those of the holy ministry,

but no repose was given him. His vast learning, added to an incomparable zeal for the salvation of souls, opened to him against his will the path to another kind of apostolate.

Mgr. Nicolas Joseph Dehesselle, Bishop of Namur, having been suddenly taken from his flock, on the 15th of August, 1865, Father Dechamps was called to Rome and presented to Pius IX., who had already for some years fixed his eyes upon him. Preconized for the vacant see in the secret consistory of September 25, 1865, he received on the first of the following month the episcopal character by the imposition of the hands of his Eminence Cardinal de Reisach, assisted by Mgr. Joseph Berardi, Archbishop of Nicea *in partibus*, and Mgr. Henry Edward Manning, Archbishop of Westminster. The ceremony of consecration took place in the Church of the Redemptorists in Rome. Ten days after the new bishop pronounced, in the Cathedral of Frascati, the funeral oration of his spiritual son, General Lamoricière, who died on the eleventh of the preceding month. He had been the instrument chosen by God to make this illustrious warrior a true Christian, and to

cause him to devote his sword to the defence of the Papacy. Mgr. Victor Augustus Dechamps took canonical possession of the bishopric of Namur October 25, and was personally installed in his cathedral on the 12th of November, to commence a new life of apostolic work and sacrifice. He chose for his coat of arms the image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, in which Saint Alphonsus had great confidence, and for armorial motto the invocation of the Church: *Pervia cæli porta manes*.\*

In 1867 his Lordship the Bishop of Namur returned to the Eternal City to assist with his venerable colleagues at the eighteenth centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Peter, and at the canonization of the martyrs of Gorcum.

In a consistory held December 20th of the same year he was preconized to the metropolitan and primatial see of Mechlin, which Cardinal Sterckx, his intimate friend, had governed and rendered illustrious for more than thirty-five years. On December 31 he took possession of his new see through Mgr. J. B. Lauwers, the oldest of the

\* The motive of this choice is sufficiently indicated in chapter xxiv. of the *Nouvelle Eve*.

three vicars-general, and made his solemn entrance into the city and Church of Saint Rombaut January 28, 1868.

Propriety requires us to say no more. In the exalted position that Mgr. Dechamps has occupied for six years he remains, what he was before he was raised to this dignity, a Redemptorist in heart and soul. May heaven grant to the Primate of Belgium an episcopacy that will surpass in duration that of his eminent predecessor, for the good of the diocese, the country, and the entire Church!

## F.

*Letter of the Rev. Father de Held, Provincial of Belgium, to the Rev. Father Victor Dechamps, Rector of the Redemptorist Convent in Liège (Page 105).*

ON BOARD THE "HIBERNIA,"

April 28, 1845.

REVEREND AND DEAR FATHER RECTOR;  
This is the tenth day of our voyage. It would fill a little journal were I to note down all that

has happened until now. But I desire to send you news without delay. After having sustained a furious tempest, we now hope to arrive at Halifax (a place belonging to the English, a voyage of thirty hours from Boston) in three or four days. We will there mail our letters for Europe; they will leave Halifax May 3, and thus I hope you will receive news from us about the middle of the same month. Father Kaltenbach will have received my letter from Hanley.

Our voyage to Liverpool was prosperous. I found all those persons to whom I desired to speak. We met our travelling companions there, and on Saturday, the 19th of April, at half-past four o'clock in the evening, we left the harbor for the New World. During the first days of our voyage, and even until the close of the past week, we had favorable weather.

Besides the dangers attendant on all sea-voyages, we have met with one peculiar to steamships: that of being burned in the middle of the ocean. On Monday, the 21st inst., while at supper, at about eight o'clock in the evening, a fire broke out in the kitchen. It was

an hour and a half before we could master it; three times we believed it extinguished, and as often did it break out again with renewed violence. We finally conquered it, and could return thanks to Divine Providence and to the Blessed Virgin for having delivered us from the first danger. It was great enough to give us an opportunity of making an offering of our lives to our Heavenly Father.

During Friday night there arose a tempest that lasted until Monday morning, and placed us in new dangers. This danger may perhaps have appeared greater to us, because of our inexperience in sea-voyages, than to those who are more accustomed to them. However, one cannot describe such things but according to the impressions made upon him. I will, then, relate our perils as I felt them.

TUESDAY, April 29, 1845, 1 o'clock.

My narration was interrupted yesterday, and now that I resume, we are in the midst of still greater dangers. We are surrounded by mountains of ice, and in such a manner that nothing but a miracle can save us. We have to-day

prepared ourselves for death, and made our confessions as if for the last time.

I resume the recital where I left off yesterday. As regards the time of the tempest, it was most terrible during the night of Saturday. I did not close my eyes. The violent and irregular motion of the ship, the howling of the winds, the continual creaking of the vessel, which seemed ready to be rent asunder at every lash of the waves—all this so forcibly affected the feelings and the imagination that at every instant we believed we would be buried in the deep. I passed this night also in prayer, making acts of resignation, and recommending my soul to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, to Saint Alphonsus and all the saints.

The morning, with the exception of the darkness, had lost nothing of the horrors of the night. As during the night, at every moment the waves fell with the greatest violence on the vessel, entering the cabins by various ways. I always considered a sea-voyage as something full of dangers; but the reality far surpasses the idea that one may form of it. Under such circumstances the advantage of steamships over

sailing-vessels is evinced by the fact that, in spite of the weather, they always make headway, though it be ever so little. In the worst weather we advanced three miles—that is to say, a good league—in an hour.

During the night of Saturday we met with another danger, of which we knew nothing until the next day.

Between midnight and one o'clock the rudder-chain broke, and for more than an hour we were drifting about without rudder, at the mercy of wind and wave. It is under such circumstances that the English sailor is to be admired; he loses neither presence of mind nor calmness in the midst of the most imminent dangers. For this reason many will not risk the perils of the ocean on ships not manned by English sailors. We had many opportunities of acknowledging the great civility and kindness of the entire crew of the *Hibernia*.

TUESDAY, 9 P.M.

I know not whether you will receive this letter or not, but I will continue in the hope that Divine Providence and the Blessed Virgin will save us. For several hours we have been sur-

rounded by icebergs, and, in order not to cause further damage to the wheels, already in a bad condition, we made no progress during the night. Notwithstanding the assurances of the captain that he has escaped greater dangers, our position is very perilous. Father Bayer, who has made the voyage several times, says that a miracle alone will save us. He also made his confession, as if for the last time.

It seems that, notwithstanding the courage that all endeavor to assume by eating, laughing, and amusing themselves, they all really share our anxiety; for the discovery of a ship, seen in the distance, about eight o'clock in the evening, contrary to all expectation, filled every one with joy. This vessel belonged to men in search of seal. They sent us a large boat, warning us that there was much ice in the direction we had taken, but gave us hopes that towards midnight we would find the sea less obstructed. These men have advised us to wait until morning, when they will conduct us through the ice. Good-night, then, until the morning, if we be alive.

N.B.—Here it is half-past nine o'clock at

night; with you it is one o'clock in the morning

WEDNESDAY, April 30, A.M.

We are still in the ice. We have profited by the delay to repair the damage done to the vessel, and to make an ice-breaker to be attached to our ship. The sealers whom we met last night came on board this morning, and acted as our pilots. They are brave Irish Catholics, sent by the Blessed Virgin in order to save us, if we are to be saved. The captain is very well satisfied to avail himself of the assistance of these brave men, whose boat we have taken in tow. It is a frightful thing to find ourselves surrounded on all sides by these great mountains of ice, on which the fishermen pursue the seal that crouch here and there upon them. We continue to pray and to be resigned to the fate which Divine Providence has in store for us.

WEDNESDAY, 9 o'clock P.M.

We continued our journey in the midst of the ice until seven o'clock in the evening, when the captain stopped the engine, in order not to expose the machinery, and, above all, the

wheels, that have already been damaged. Those who have frequently made this voyage do not recollect ever to have encountered such a quantity of ice. They say that this winter, which has been so rigorous in Europe, has been extremely mild in the northern seas, where the thaw commenced in the month of January. Every one recognized an especial mark of the favor of Providence in the arrival of the Newfoundland fishermen. Their captain remained for an entire day exposed to the bitter frost on the top of the ship's ladder, and guided us through the icebergs with astonishing intrepidity and certainty. We had already taken up a subscription for the purpose of securing their services as far as Halifax, when suddenly a difficulty arose between our captain and pilot, to the great regret of all the passengers, some of whom had offered them from two hundred to two hundred and fifty francs if they would conduct us to Halifax; but our rescuers left us, and here we are floating about on the ocean during the night, and surrounded by ice. It seems, however, that we have passed the great-

est dangers. We confide in the Blessed Virgin, whose beautiful month commences to-morrow; unfortunately for us, it is not very agreeable to begin the month of May in the midst of seal-hunts. Good-night. With you it is now one o'clock in the morning. As for myself, I am going on deck to pray before retiring for the night.

MAY 1, FEAST OF THE ASCENSION,

I O'CLOCK P.M.

With you it will soon be five o'clock; you are preaching at Notre Dame.

To-day, the first day of the month of May, towards eleven o'clock, we passed the last iceberg. It was frightful to behold. When we arose, the sun was shining brightly, but the weather was very cold, and we found ourselves surrounded by as much ice as ever. Those who have made the voyage twenty times never witnessed such a sight. We advanced very slowly, and, to all appearances, there was no hope of being speedily relieved from our precarious position. Every one, even the officers, appeared quite dejected. Great, then, was the joy of all when towards eleven

o'clock we found ourselves beyond the ice, and the sea free and calm. The moment we passed this last iceberg was truly grand and imposing, especially when, for the first time in the fifty-three hours that we passed in the ice, the captain cried out: "*Full steam!*" Are we now at the end of our trials? God alone knows. We hope; and Father Bayer continues to say that it is by miracle we have escaped these perils.

FRIDAY, May 2.

We finally escaped from the icebergs yesterday, and we joyfully continued our journey with great swiftness. It was, however, necessary to take a more southern course than we had intended, so as not to be impeded again by the troublesome icebergs. From time to time we still meet them, as high as mountains. They seem to be firm in the sea. During the day, when we are out of danger, they are magnificent to behold; but it is a different thing at night, because of the extreme rashness of our captain. We were sailing with great rapidity, the fog not permitting us to distinguish anything, when suddenly we found ourselves in front of one of these

frightful mountains. We barely avoided a collision, which would have inevitably crushed us in the twinkling of an eye. The ship did not escape without damage. Again we must cry out: *Misericordiæ Domini, quia non sumus consumpti*. Last evening, while walking on deck, I thought of this danger, and made the Way of the Cross for having been preserved.

It is hardly probable that I can send you this letter as soon as I expected. It is particularly on the sea that we can say: *Homo proponit, Deus disponit*.

In the midst of so many dangers one is painfully affected by the thought of being among Protestants, who have not the gift of prayer; all they do is to read some passages of the Bible, many copies of which are found in the library of the ship.

Thanks be to God, we arrived at Halifax yesterday, and offered there the first Mass of thanksgiving. Although it was already two o'clock in the afternoon, I was very happy to be able to offer the Holy Sacrifice. We are now on our way to Boston, where we hope to arrive tomorrow morning. We will celebrate holy Mass

there, and remain till Wednesday, when we will go by rail to New York.

If Very Rev. Father Vicar-General is with you, kiss his hand for me.

Remember me to all my dear confrères; my travelling companions desire the same kind remembrance. Continue to pray for us, and particularly for your devoted brother in Jesus Christ,

FR. DE HELD, C.SS.R.

P. S.—Kind regards to our friends and acquaintances.

*Letter of Rev. Father Gillet to the Very Rev.  
Father de Held.*

MONROE, April 13, 1845.

VERY REV. FATHER PROVINCIAL: It is always with the greatest joy that I receive news from Belgium, and above all from your reverence. I received your last letter in August, on my return from the long journey I had made to Baltimore to regulate affairs with Father Alexander concerning our new French foundation. I am glad to hear that you approve of my

enterprise, and I count on your reverence to support it ; for it must contribute greatly to the glory of God in a country where are found so many abandoned souls, deprived of all the aids of religion. In selecting the little city of Monroe for our establishment I had in view to make it the centre of the mission, from whence our fathers can go to different parts of the large State of Michigan, and even beyond it, to give regular missions and to repeat those already given. We have been more than a year at Monroe. My companions at present are Father Poilvache, two candidate lay brothers, and an Irish student of theology. Our church, which is Gothic, is 100 feet long and 50 feet wide, with a tower 100 feet high ; but as it is too small to accommodate the faithful, we have commenced the work of adding a sanctuary of twenty-eight feet. At the back of the church I have laid the foundation of a brick convent, which will be thirty-five feet wide and seventy long. I hope to complete the work this year. Our parish at Monroe is composed of French Canadians, Irish, and Germans. Besides the parish, properly so called, nine stations, constituting part of the

parish, are attended by us, seven of which are composed entirely of Irish. Judge by this whether I stand in want of a fast horse. I will soon have served an apprenticeship in the art of riding. Being forced to speak English, I have succeeded pretty well, so that now I frequently preach in that language. Father Poilvache usually attends the parish and the French missions. As to missions which are called for from all parts, I have been obliged to refuse them until the arrival of other fathers. My furthest station from here is about sixty miles. We therefore sometimes carry the Holy Viaticum to the sick to the distance of sixty miles from Monroe. An immense field is open in this country to the sons of Saint Alphonsus. The good that has already been performed by the grace of God is incalculable; but who can measure all that is yet to be done? How many missions demanded! How many French Congregations yet deprived of priests, and for how long a time! I desire to be everywhere when I think of so many needs. Often, in casting my eyes on Europe, and particularly on Belgium, I cannot but be astonished to see

among so many priests so few who dream of the vast field that lies open here to their zeal. The Catholic religion has spread particularly in Monroe; many Protestants have already made their abjuration, and I have about a dozen more who are under instruction! Catholics by becoming temperate have at the same time become fervent. To renounce spirituous liquors is the chief point; thus I insist upon it, and unceasingly preach temperance from a conviction that it is the first step for a Canadian towards becoming a good Catholic. During the past year and a half I have given the pledge—that is to say, received the promise of temperance—to four thousand Canadians, who are divided into seven societies. That of Monroe numbers one thousand two hundred members. This society is established in the manner of a confraternity, having monthly meetings and a rule approved by Mgr. Lefevre, Bishop of Detroit. Such, Very Rev. Father, in a few words, is the result of our labors. God has visibly blessed them, and has made use of weak instruments like ourselves to recall so many abandoned souls to the practice of their religion. All bless our Lord for the

happy change effected among the French. Even the Protestants are astonished, and more than once they have borne witness to the truth in their journals, and acknowledged their inability to effect like results. I alone complain in seeing fall upon me the cares of this new foundation, the fatigues of so many stations, and, above all, those for the Irish. I am always sustained by the hope that you will not abandon me, and that you will lighten the burden that has been laid upon my shoulders in placing me at the head of this mission.

Send me, if you please, a good father to take charge of the mission, and, above all, some zealous missionaries. As for health, there is nothing to fear; no one was more feeble than myself in this respect, and now, with the Canadian fare, frugal as it is, I am able to sustain alone the fatigues of an entire mission, preaching two or three times a day. Why have I not here some confrères from Liége? Have the goodness to thank M—— K—— for me for his kindness in sending me his journal, which I receive regularly.

My regards to all my confrères at Liége, etc.

FATHER LOUIS GILLET, C.SS.R.

## G.

*Notice of Father Poilvache, by Rev. F. Gillet*  
(Page 110).

FEBRUARY 12, 1848.

MY DEAR FRIEND: I have just received the letter in which you inform me of the sad and afflicting news of the death, as sudden as it was premature, of Rev. Father Poilvache, a priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, who died at Monroe, Michigan, on the night of the 26th of January last, after an illness of from ten to twelve hours.

For twenty years a faithful witness of the virtues of the deceased, a companion of his early youth and of his studies, as well as of his apostolic career, I have been able to appreciate the purity of his zeal, the goodness of his heart, and the heroism of his virtues. It would also have been a sweet consolation for me to be present at his last hour; but God has otherwise ordained. Voluntarily exiled for the love of Jesus Christ, he died in a foreign land, many thousand miles from his country, leaving to his parents and his friends no other inheritance than his lessons of

virtue, and of himself no other remembrance than his name. It is not so much to contribute something to his memory as to console his many friends, and to render our dear deceased a last tribute of attachment, that I transmit you this short biographical notice of Father Poilvache, who is at present mourned not only by the Catholic Congregation of Monroe, but by all Catholics of Michigan.

Francis Poilvache was born May 12, 1812, in the village of Eben-Emael, in the Diocese of Liége, in Belgium. His estimable parents are still living. They are in easy circumstances, and enjoy in their country a great reputation for virtue and probity. Young Francis commenced early in life his studies at the Royal College of Liége, and completed them under the guidance of pious and learned masters in the petit séminaire at Liége, established in the ancient Abbey of Rolduc. It was in this happy asylum of virtue and piety that his vocation to the religious state, as well as mine, was formed and matured, and on the 9th of September, 1834, he entered as novice the Redemptorist Convent at Saint Trond. He was then twenty-two years of age.

The year of his novitiate being finished, he was admitted to the religious profession of the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. As he had been in the world a model of regularity, he was in religion a constant example of a true religious. His ill-health, which did not permit him to apply his mind, delayed for some years his theological studies, and he was not ordained priest until July 3, 1842. From that time he exercised the holy ministry in Belgium with a zeal and devotedness that caused his departure to be deeply regretted.

He had for a long time ardently desired to go to America. His zeal and his charity kept his mind constantly turned to these distant regions, and particularly after he had heard that beyond the ocean, in a remote corner of America, in Michigan, there was a certain number of poor Catholics, speaking the language of his country, who, on account of the scarcity of priests, were deprived of the consolations of religion. Continually haunted by this thought, he solicited for two years the permission of his superiors to devote himself to the salvation of these abandoned souls. His generous offer, so long tried, was

finally accepted ; and three hours after having received the news he was on his way to America. After a voyage of thirty days he landed on the hospitable shores of America, which became his new country and his grave. He was at first sent to Rochester, where he was charged with the care of a French and German Congregation ; some months afterwards he received orders to go to Michigan, which was to be the theatre of his zeal and the place of his repose. It was there he worked for nearly four years with a zeal and a devotion truly worthy of an apostle of Jesus Christ, and which rendered his name dear to all who knew him. His courage never wavered, his zeal never relaxed, when he was called to any place to exercise his ministry. How often, when sick himself, did he not leave his bed at night to carry to others the consolations of religion, frequently travelling great distances, fearing not to expose himself to the scorching sun of summer or to the cold winds of winter ! The children, the poor, the afflicted, the sick, all experienced the effects of his constant charity. His zeal and devotedness were not confined to the limits of Monroe. Oh ! how many evangelized and fer-

vent parishes are indebted to him, after God, for the happy change of which Michigan is to-day the witness. How many families, how many individuals, owe to him the peace and serenity that they enjoy since their return to religion ! It was above all in our great missions that Father Poilvache knew how to manifest the resources of his apostolic zeal, and the unalterable sweetness of his character enabled him to subdue the most obdurate hearts. It was then that, entirely forgetful of himself, he appeared no longer the weak and suffering man, but the indefatigable apostle, whose only hunger and thirst was the salvation of souls. On these occasions he knew how to throw off, as it were, his habitual infirmities, in order to clothe himself alone with the strength of Jesus Christ. Such, in a few words, was the public life of Father Poilvache. God alone was witness of the many acts of interior virtue which were practised by this man of God and true religious.

So many arduous labors could not fail to destroy a constitution which had always been weak and failing, particularly from the time he had charge of the French Congregations. For a

long while Father Francis had felt his strength sensibly diminishing, and was not deceived with regard to his approaching death; much less did he fear it. His last words, on my parting with him on the 14th of November last, and to which I did not then pay attention, have proved but too true. "Adieu," he said to me; "in four months I will no longer be of this world."

Father Francis was the first priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer who died in America. Without doubt he has gone to a better world to receive the reward of his labors and sacrifices. He left to his brothers in religion, as an inheritance and consolation, the remembrance of his virtues and example; to his parents, who are still ignorant of their loss, the consolation of having given an apostle to Michigan; to his friends, to the Congregation of Monroe, and to the French of Michigan, the lessons of salvation that he never failed to teach them, both by word and example.

Such will be the most lasting and most glorious monument that can be raised to the memory of this apostolic man; and the pious remembrance of Father Francis, engraven in the hearts

of the French Canadians, will be the living epitaph that time will not efface.

FATHER LOUIS GILLET.

## H.

### *Mission at Heiken (Page 111).*

There is a heath in Holland remarkable for its position, for the character of its inhabitants, and the events of which it has been the theatre. It is the little heath of Heiken, situated between the marquisate of Berg-op-Zoom and the barony of Bréda. As it was in evil repute for many years, on account of the highwaymen and thieves that it secreted in its caves, neither of the two lords of these districts recognized it as part of his domain. The French, having become masters of the Netherlands, tried in vain to conquer this half-savage people. Napoleon himself could effect nothing in the change of its morals by having the most guilty leaders executed without mercy. Only twenty years ago (1845) the authorities sent thither a military body to inspire terror, with orders to inflict sum-

mary punishment on the most guilty. It was an uncommon thing for one of them to die in his bed; they ended their days either on the scaffold or in chains, or they killed one another in riots. Such was the condition of this ferocious people until 1830. The troops that were encamped in the vicinity only rendered the heath the more notorious for its houses of debauchery, nightly dances, and bloody conflicts, to which they abandoned themselves with impunity. This vicious people, so prone to evil, preserved in their hearts a faith that was truly astonishing. All baptized and Catholics, it seemed that their isolated condition was the principal cause of their ignorance and demoralization. The pious bishop *in partibus*, Mgr. J. Van Hooydonck, administrator of the vicariate of Bréda, bewailed this state of affairs, and sought means to remedy it. After having overcome many difficulties, he had a church built there in 1840, which was dedicated to Saint Willibrord, whose name the village now bears. At the side of the church a residence was built for the pastor, and a house for the religious charged with the education of young girls. An exemplary

priest, M. Koes, whose zeal is sufficiently known, offered himself to take charge of this flock, deprived of a shepherd. Thus was the new parish formed, that reckons to day 425 communicants. The government, on its part, full of admiration for this beautiful work, seconded the efforts of the bishop, and supported at its expense a Catholic school-teacher. But this was not sufficient. It was necessary to supply these poor people with work to raise them to the rank of honest citizens; for this purpose an association of wealthy and pious men was formed, who assumed the responsibility of giving them employment and of assisting them in their work.

Religion alone could accomplish the civilization of these poor people. The good curé left nothing untried to instruct them in their duties and to reform their morals. After some time, finding that his zeal met with little success, he thought of calling on the missionaries to assist him in finishing his work. The mission was consequently asked for, and was opened on the 8th of February (1845) by Father Bernard, accompanied by Father Janson. It is impossible

to describe the joy of these people, their desire to hear the Word of God, and the eagerness with which they embraced the exercises of piety authorized by the Church. The Way of the Cross, the beads, the scapular, all had a singular attraction for these hearts, until then so hard and insensible. All without exception approached the Sacrament of Penance; and there was not a family, even of the saddest celebrity in the judiciary annals, that did not attend the mission. One person alone resisted to the end, notwithstanding the exhortations of his friends, and even of the missionaries, who called to see him. The honor of this conquest was reserved to Mary. In the farewell sermon, when the audience was moved to tears, the preacher expressed bitter regret at not having been able to recall this strayed sheep to the fold; he then recommended him to Mary, and requested the audience to pray for him. The next day he too joined the faithful flock.

The last day of the mission Mgr. Van Hooydonck, accompanied by his worthy secretary, was received by these good people with demonstra-

tions of the most lively joy and the most sincere gratitude. After a touching address he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to the children of both sexes and to several adults. Solemn High Mass was celebrated on the following day for the deceased of the parish, and the missionaries carried to the sick the consolations of religion.

Thus was terminated this interesting mission, which so forcibly recalls to our minds the one given by Saint Alphonsus de Liguori to the herdsmen, or to the inhabitants of Calabria. It was everywhere applauded; and there is every reason to hope that, by the solicitude of the pious prelate and the zeal of the good curé, the fruits will be lasting. An association for the extirpation of blasphemy, in which all the men were enrolled, was solemnly established; also a Sunday-school for boys and girls, and a society in honor of Saint Aloysius de Gonzaga. With such means of perseverance, who would not nourish the sweetest hopes for the prosperity of the new parish of Saint Willibrord, both in a civil as well as in a religious respect? But, above all, who can fail to admire here the divinity of a religion which effected in so short a time what human

power and the rigor of the laws had not been able to accomplish? \*

## I.

*A Few Observations Relative to the Work of the Missions.*

Saint Alphonsus ranks among the most signal benefits of Divine Providence that of having willed to institute in a depraved age the efficacious means of missions for the salvation of souls. "Missions," says the great doctor, "are the support of the Church; the principal, if not the only, means to preserve the faith, and to establish it solidly on the rock which is Jesus Christ."

Experience confirms these words of Saint Alphonsus. The wonderful success that his children have obtained by the work of the missions proves the truth of the remark. But this success must be attributed, after the grace of God, to the method adopted by the Redemptorists in their missions—a method bequeathed to them

\* Taken from the *Journal Historique* de M. Kersten, vol. xii. page 19.

by their holy founder. We will examine the exercises in detail.

I. *Sermons*.—The powerful effect of the mission sermons on the audience is principally owing to the subjects of which the missionaries treat. Missions having for their object the conversion of souls, and the common people forming the great majority of the hearers, both in cities and in the country, the Redemptorists do not treat on these occasions of purely speculative matters. They instruct the people in the principal points of Catholic belief—the end of man, the immortality of the soul, the torments of hell, the Church, its authority, its priesthood, its sacraments, and particularly those of penance and the Eucharist. These subjects are adapted to the capacity of all, and always have a practical end in view. The greater part of the sermons have for their object the reformation of morals, the commandments of God and of the Church, sin, the passions, the occasions of sin, and the means of sanctification.

The sermons thus comprise a collection of truths which make a decided impression on souls, and gain them to Jesus Christ. First in order

are the great truths of faith—the last end of man, sin, death, judgment, and hell—truths so well calculated to arouse the indifferent. Resting on this foundation, which they never abandon, and which they continually recall to the minds of their hearers, they attack the passions, the abuses that prevail in the locality where the mission is given, such as blasphemy, intemperance, injustice, impurity, profanation of Sundays and holydays, immoral reading, bad company, improper amusements, human respect, etc., etc. Then follow the general and particular duties of the Christian life. The last days of the mission are devoted to the means of sanctification, as prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin—in a word, to all those practices suitable to form souls to piety and to preserve them in virtue.

Not satisfied with adapting their sermons to the wants of the people in general, the Redemptorists give instructions to the particular classes. They give instructions to the married men and women, to the young men and young women, to parents—for they never fail to treat of the important question of the family, as

the education of children, etc.—and also to masters and servants. The fathers also give particular instructions to the children, who cannot follow with fruit the general exercises of the missions. This method, which places the fathers in a most intimate relation with the entire people, serves to make them more popular. The people are delighted at seeing them so solicitous about their welfare; but the great effect of this method consists in causing the truths of faith and the moral law to penetrate deeper into souls and to ensure the success of the mission. The Redemptorists adopt a simple style in their sermons. Like their holy founder, they desire that their discourses be understood by their hearers. It is precisely this simplicity which pleases the people, and attracts them to the mission sermons; they are delighted with a language which they understand, and which makes the truth clear to them. Are we not, like the apostles, debtors to all? Do not the common people form the great majority in the cities as well as in the country? Are the higher classes of society more enlightened in religion? Does not experience daily prove that lofty speculations

and polished sermons are unintelligible to the greater part even of those persons whom one is pleased to call the intelligent class, but to which ought to be applied these words : *Homo animalis qui non intelligit quæ Dei sunt ?* Such sermons leave them in their religious indifference, while popular sermons, the merit of which lies in their solidity and clearness, in their noble simplicity of style, and in that ardent zeal which springs from the love of souls, convert them, provided they be of good-will.

II. *Prayer*.—Prayer recited aloud by the whole congregation in the church and during processions is a distinctive mark of the Redemptorist missions. “Prayer is the great weapon of salvation,” says Saint Alphonsus; “sermons are fruitless to a soul that does not pray.” In missions given by the Redemptorist fathers the people are forced, as it were, to pray, in spite of themselves; even the men join in this public prayer. After the mission the custom of praying privately and in common, at their homes or in the church, is preserved. We could relate many instances where family prayers were unknown in parishes before the mission, but were found in

practice many years after the mission had been given. In many parishes the curés did not attempt to have prayers said aloud in church, or, if it was attempted, the voices of the children alone were heard; but after the mission the people willingly prayed aloud with the priest.

The beads are usually recited by the fathers before the sermon and during the processions; for is not Mary the channel of all graces? In many parishes the recitation of the beads in public or in private has become a custom since the mission.

III. *Chant and Ceremonies.*—The singing of hymns by the people, and the ceremonies, are important features in missions given by the Redemptorist Fathers, and render them truly popular.

Every evening, before the sermon and during the procession, the people sing hymns. The principal ceremonies are: The act of atonement made to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament in reparation for sin; the consécration to the Blessed Virgin after the sermon on the goodness and power of Mary—a sermon which Saint Alphonsus made of precept, and to which is justly

attributed a particular efficacy for the conversion of souls ; the procession, and the erection of the cross ; the solemn exercise of the Way of the Cross ; the blessing of the children ; the renewal of baptismal vows ; the public reception of the scapular ; the solemn blessing of beads and other pious objects ; the blessing of fields ; and, lastly, the Papal Benediction, given after the closing sermon. These ceremonies are conducted with all possible solemnity, especially the act of atonement, the consecration to the Blessed Virgin, and the Papal Benediction, which are always accompanied by a magnificent illumination. During these ceremonies the altars are beautifully decorated ; the wax candles which are used are supplied at the expense of the congregation. Why all these ceremonies ? some may ask ; we see in them only a grand spectacle. Be it so ; but are they not necessary for the people, who would otherwise have recourse to corrupt, worldly demonstrations ? It is necessary for truth to speak through the senses in order to reach the soul. The ceremonies are nothing else than the great truths made visible ; the Church adapts herself to the needs of human nature. Whatever may

be said against the singing and the ceremonies on the missions, facts prove their utility ; for it is public prayer, the singing of hymns, and the ceremonies that give life to the Redemptorist missions, because all these answer to the wants of the people, who thus take an active part in the exercises of the mission. On these occasions the people throng the church and leave it filled with compunction and piety, being always resolved to return to hear the missionaries. Many souls, who had remained insensible to the preaching of the Word of God, formed the resolution to change their life at witnessing one or the other of the ceremonies of the mission. Often the act of reparation, the procession of the cross, or the consecration to the Blessed Virgin ensured the success of the mission, until then doubtful.

Public prayer, the singing of hymns, and the ceremonies have the not less important result of overcoming human respect. Those men who have prayed and sung aloud in the church and in the streets of their parish, often in the presence of a crowd of strangers who have come from the neighboring parishes ; those men who have received publicly the scapular ; those young men

who have carried the cross in the procession, fear not after the mission to profess themselves Christians, and to take an active part in the works and the demonstrations of other Catholics.

These results are too apparent to deserve further comment. We know distinguished prelates, to whom the ceremonies, etc., appeared too vulgar, tending only to excite the imagination, who have acknowledged their happy results, and recommended them especially to those parishes most difficult to be reformed. If the tree is known by its fruit, this sufficiently proves the worth of the method followed by the Redemptorists, considering the great number of missions they have given since their arrival in Belgium, and the blessings which God has unceasingly bestowed upon them.

For forty years the Redemptorists have incessantly labored in Belgium; and though the fathers of eight houses are still occupied in every diocese of the country, still their number and their incessant activity are insufficient to answer the demands made upon their zeal by the confidence of the bishops and the clergy. Does

not this confidence of the pastors of souls, who can truly appreciate the results of missions, prove the utility of the method adopted by the missionaries? Bishops and priests unhesitatingly assert that God blesses their labors in a marvellous manner.

It is unnecessary to mention here the fruits generally produced by these missions: the many stained consciences cleansed, the many sacrilegious confessions repaired, the many abuses abolished. Suffice it to consider, in the first place, the many returns of persons who had abandoned the practice of their religious duties; and, in the second place, the reviving of the spirit of piety in souls. The more frequent reception of the sacraments, the increase of the spirit of prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, are blessings which must in a great measure be attributed to the Redemptorist missions. The associations formed or re-established by the fathers, whenever circumstances permit, have contributed not a little to revive the spirit of piety.

It is true that these fruits are not always lasting; for, apart from those who persevere, there are always some, particularly among the

young men, who relapse into their disorders. But who is ignorant of the inconstancy of human nature and the numberless inventions of the powers of evil? In order to prevent these relapses, Saint Alphonsus established a practice peculiar to the Redemptorists—that of the renewal given a few months after each mission. These renewals complete the extirpation of abuses, and often result in the conversion of those who rejected the grace of the mission.

One of the most zealous of the prelates whom Belgium honors, Mgr. Van Bommel, Bishop of Liége, has declared he could easily distinguish those parishes which had received the blessings of a mission from those that had been deprived of such aid. He extolled the ceremony of the erection of the cross as an efficacious means to engrave upon hearts the remembrance of the mission. His lordship, on arriving in a parish, knelt with the people at the foot of the mission cross, in order to gain the indulgences attached to it.

Without doubt, after the expiration of a certain time, it becomes necessary to repeat the exercises of the mission; for, besides other

general causes, drawn from our nature and the influence of the spirit of evil, another generation will have grown up. For this reason the bishops—and among others his Grace the Archbishop of Mechlin—have prescribed in their diocesan statutes that the exercises of a mission be given in each parish every seventh or eighth year.

## J.

*Oratio ad Matrem Divini Pastoris, utiliter dicenda a Patribus in Visitatione Beatissimæ Virginis, Tempore Missionis.*

Salve, O Mater divini Pastoris, post Jesum spes mea et salus mea! Sine, obsecro, ut ad pedes tuos pusillum requiescam de labore meo, ac pro me et populo tuo isto novas ac magnas a te gratias implorem.

Credo Jesum Christum, Filium tuum, Pastorem esse istarum ovium, pro quibus non dubitavit effundere sanguinem suum, et crucis subire tormentum. Credo etiam pretium hujus sanguinis in te fuisse collatum, ac neminem perire ad

quem benigna respicere dignaris. Audio enim S. Bernardum mihi dicentem, nunquam auditum esse a saeculo, quod aliquis, tuam implorans misericordiam, à te sit derelictus. Audio S. Alphonsum mihi clamantem, quod nemo salvus fiat, quem tu, O Mater! non protexeris.

Accipe ergo preces supplices, quas tibi pro me et populo isto in hac hora tibi offero. Si inveni gratiam coram oculis tuis, salva me et populum istum, pro quo tibi obsecro. Tui sunt, sed mihi eos dedisti. Tui sunt, nam illos diligis, ut mater amorosa filios suos. Proprio Filio tuo non parcens, illum pro illorum salute in mortem tradidisti. Sed mihi eos dedisti, ut per verbum ministerii nostri convertantur, ac vere conversi te tuumque Filium diligant ac in aeternum laudent. Benedic ergo, O pia Mater! benedic, O tu Refugium peccatorum, et post Jesum, unica illorum Spes! oves perditas hujus parochiae N——. Quantumvis diu longeque a te erraverint, reduc pietosa manu tua omnes ad pedes nostros. Nemo, quaeso, damnandus ex hac missione discedat; sed omnes in his diebus misericorditer ad pascua Jesu, dilecti Filii tui, revertantur. Da illis evidens signum

misericordiae tuae, fontes lacrymarum jugiter manantes, cor contritum ac docile.

Respice etiam super nos, famulos tuos, quibus Jesus Filius tuus dedit ministerium reconciliationis; consolare nos jucundo vultu tuo inter tot labores quos pro gloria Filii tui hisce diebus suscepimus; ac roborâ animum nostrum, ne zelus noster tepescat, sed magis semper ardeat. Custodi cor et sensus nostros, ne, nimio laborum pondere oppressi, nobismetipsos nos denegemus, ac, neglectâ propriâ salute, tandem reprobî fiamus. Permaneat unusquisque nostrum in proposito cordis sui. Mente revolvat ac opere exequatur quidquid initio hujus missionis sibi statuerit. Agat negotium profectus sui, instet in meditatione, et precibus jaculatoriis iisque fervidis se cum Deo uniat. Omni custodia servet cor suum, ac pactum ineat cum oculis, ne cogitet quidem de virgine. Immaculatum se custodiat ab omni contagione mundi. Sic plenus meritis, et tibi tuoque Filio dilecto charior effectus, ad suos revertetur, et sibi in Domino gaudere licebit, quod et haec missio in coelis est adscripta et copiosam illi mercedem praeparavit. Amen.

## K.

*Account of Father Bernard's Third Voyage to America, given in a Letter from Rev. Father Dold to the Father Rector of the Convent at Wittem (page 124).*

In Chapter XI. of this little work I have briefly related the third voyage of Father Bernard to America (January 27 to March 19, 1851). On this voyage he had with him a number of his confrères. These were: Father De Landtsheer, of the Diocese of Ghent; Fathers Hecker, Walworth, Kittel, and Dold, together with the students Henry Hellemans, of the Diocese of Mechlin, Henry Giesen, of Aix-la-Chapelle, Michael Müller, and Joseph Wirth.

Before proceeding to the account of the voyage I propose giving a short sketch of the two Belgians who have already gone to their reward.

Charles Louis de Landtsheer was born in the village of Calken (East Flanders), Belgium, December 21, 1812.

Having completed his preparatory studies, he entered the Seminary of Ghent in 1835, and distinguished himself by his great progress in philosophy and theology. He was ordained priest May 25, 1839, and appointed vicar, first of Strypen, afterwards of Melsele, in 1841. "An ardent zeal for the glory of God, great charity towards his neighbor, and a holy severity towards himself, made of him an exemplary priest according to the heart of God" (Obituary Notice). He had spent twelve years in the exercise of the holy ministry in his own country, when, feeling himself called to labor on foreign missions, he earnestly begged leave of Mgr. Delbecque to enter the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. The bishop was not disposed to grant his request, but yielded at length to his repeated solicitations. Accordingly, he entered the Redemptorist Convent at Saint Trond, where he received the habit of the order, October 15, 1850, Feast of Saint Teresa. He left Europe in January, 1851, and landed at New York on the Feast of Saint Joseph of the same year (March 19). Having completed his novitiate, he pronounced his vows, October 15, 1851. He

was sent to New York during Lent of the following year to assist the fathers, several of whom were very ill at that time, whilst the others were overladen with work of the most arduous nature, on account of the plague that had just broken out. The spiritual care of the emigrants was allotted to him, and he devoted himself exclusively to their welfare. But Father de Landtsheer was soon to fall a victim to his charity. During the illness of Father Cubin he could not resist the impulse of his zeal to visit the plague-stricken in the hospitals, notwithstanding the earnest remonstrances of his confrères and the inclemency of the weather. But he would listen only to the voice of charity. Although he remained without nourishment all of that day—for, with the exception of a small crust of bread and a little wine, he had tasted nothing—he visited a great many persons afflicted with typhoid fever. He was attacked by the fever on the following Sunday, after High Mass, and was obliged to take to his bed. This happened on the Feast of Saint Joseph, the first anniversary of his arrival in America. At first neither his confrères nor the physician apprehended any danger, because he

had suffered from the same disease when yet a secular priest. God had other ends in view. After an illness of ten days his disease assumed alarming symptoms. Having been fortified with the last sacraments, he peacefully surrendered his soul to its Maker, April 2, Feast of the Dolors of the Blessed Mother of God. He remained perfectly conscious up to his last moment, and kept his eyes steadily fixed on the image of the crucified Redeemer and the picture of the Ever Blessed Virgin Mary. The fathers and lay brothers of the community stood around his bed of death, and gave vent to their grief in sobs and sighs. The repeated visitation of death in their little community increased their sorrow. Within nine months four of their number had been snatched away.

The deceased was in all respects an exemplary religious and a holy priest filled with truly apostolic zeal, which endeared him not only to his confrères, but also to all those who had been the objects of his charitable ministry.

The obsequies took place on Palm Sunday (1852). His body was placed next to those of his brothers in religion who had preceded him

into paradise, where, we doubt not, he is enjoying the blissful society of his Divine Redeemer, whom on earth he had loved so tenderly and served so faithfully, together with that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and his holy father Alphonsus.

Henry Hellemans was born in the village of Wavre Ste. Catherine, not far from Malines, June 23, 1823 (July 16, 1823).

Having partly completed his studies at the petit séminaire of Malines, he entered the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer at Saint Trond, and made his religious profession one year later.

The American missions had always been the object of his dearest desires. Being yet a student at Wittem, permission was granted him by his superiors to devote himself to the apostolic labors in the United States. He came to America with Father Bernard in 1851, and completed his studies in Cumberland and Rochester. Bishop Neumann raised him to the dignity of the priesthood in Philadelphia, on Holy Saturday (March 26, 1853).

Considered as a novice, student, or priest,

Henry Hellemans was at all times a model religious. He excelled in the spirit of prayer and in a remarkable love of holy purity. God seems to have taken this young priest out of a sinful world in order that the lustre of his virtues might not be dimmed by its malice, nor his immaculate purity suffer the least stain. His spiritual director said of him: "He was a youth of angelic purity." His constant walking in the presence of God enabled him to discern the goodness and wisdom of Providence, even in the brute creation. He practised true humility, but the thought never entered his mind that he really possessed this virtue. For when he was seen exercising himself in humility by performing menial offices, he remarked, with great ingenuousness, that it was a very useful exercise to supply the want of the virtue of humility by acts of humility.

He was for a short time attached to Saint Michael's church in Baltimore. Whenever he performed the Way of the Cross with the people, it was his custom to give a short explanation of the devotion before reciting the usual prayers, during which his emotion often inter-

rupted his words, and tears of devotion always accompanied his remarks. Owing to constant ill-health, he was unable to write his sermons. This also prevented him from acquiring a thorough knowledge of the German language. His sermons, however, delivered with the utmost simplicity, produced astonishing effects. In the pulpit he appeared filled with the Spirit of God. Sometimes he would stop short in the middle of a sentence, not being able to find the proper words to complete it. On such occasions he was not at a loss, but simply remarked: "*Nicht wahr, ihr wisst schon was ich sagen will?*" (You well know what I wish to say, do you not?); and it is surprising to learn that his hearers understood him full well.

It was said above that he was constantly indisposed. His malady assumed the form of pulmonary consumption, and his body at last succumbed to the weight of infirmities. On the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (November 21, 1854), whom he had loved with an especial love, and by whom he seemed to be specially favored, he presented his pure soul to God, through the hands of his Blessed Mother.

This young priest, possessed of a zealous and generous soul, gave promise of becoming a useful and prominent laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. But he was pleased to deprive the congregation of a dutiful son by an untimely death.\*

The following account is taken from a letter written by Rev. Father Dold. I have taken the liberty of somewhat modifying and abridging it. To the letter is annexed an edifying postscript written by Father Bernard. This will serve to complete the portrait of the generous soul whose life has been described. Another powerful motive which induced me to insert the letter and postscript was the fact of their being too intimately connected with the history of Saint Alphonsus' Congregation not to be published.

NEW YORK, March 22, 1851.

VERY REVEREND FATHER RECTOR AND  
VERY DEAR BROTHERS: Thanks for the fer-

\* For the above brief but edifying sketches we are indebted to the kindness of the Chronicler of the American Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, to whom we desire in this place to tender our sincere thanks.—TRANSL.

vent prayers you addressed to heaven in our behalf! This should form the first sentence of my letter, because it is the first sentiment of my heart in writing to you. *Gloria Patri!*

After having been at sea for fifty-two days, we arrived in this new country, already dear to us, which has fallen to our lot. Your prayers have not been in vain; God has heard them, as he hears the prayers of his saints, by giving us numberless occasions to increase the store of our little spiritual treasure, instead of acquiring the perishable goods of this earth. *Per multas tribulationes oportuit nos intrare in regnum.* Let us hope that, in compliance with his merciful designs on us, we have buried in the depths of the ocean the remnants of the *old man*.

(After relating how the Redemptorist voyagers, on their way through Paris, received some pious souvenirs at the Seminary of Foreign Missions, at Notre Dame des Victoires, etc., Father Dold continues his narration in these terms:)

Notwithstanding the beautiful monuments of all kinds which we admired in the capital of the civilized world, we were anxious to depart as soon as possible. We left the great city of

Paris on the morning of the 24th of January. We were borne along with remarkable rapidity over a vast and fertile country. The forests, valleys, and mountains of Normandy each moment seemed to represent the environs of Wittem. It was now mid-day, and in spirit we united with you in making particular examen. At four o'clock in the afternoon we were informed that we were nearing the city of Rouen. This ancient capital of the Normans is built on a steep rock, which renders it almost inaccessible from every point. At some distance from the city we entered a tunnel, and, when we issued from it, we found to our surprise that we were in the middle of the old city. - Its half-ruined walls, protected by numerous towers, still reveal the antiquity of its origin and the might of its ancient lords. At present Rouen is the centre of a great commercial trade in cotton and yarn. On leaving the city a heavy fog covered the valleys and mountains, which latter always grew higher as we proceeded. Twilight now came on, and seemed to invite us to close our bodily eyes, and to open those of the soul to the light from on high. The time of meditation had come, and lasted

until seven o'clock, if not without distraction, at least without anything remarkable occurring. Towards seven o'clock in the evening we arrived at Havre. After a hot dispute between two coachmen, who wished to prove the possibility of the impossible by wishing to have all of us in their carriage at the same time, we were brought to the Hotel d'Allemagne, which had been recommended to us in Paris. But there was not even room enough to accommodate six persons for the night. We were therefore obliged to get into our carriages, and, after having been taken almost through the whole city in search of a suitable lodging, at last found accommodations at the Hotel des Indes. It was long after nine o'clock before we were seated at table. Our appetites were voracious, for we had tasted nothing since ten in the morning; but, thank God, nothing more was wanting! Next day being Sunday, the worthy dean of Notre Dame allowed us to offer the Holy Sacrifice in his church. It was the last time we enjoyed this happiness in Europe. Father De Landtsheer had even the honor of singing the parochial Mass. I have often heard people speak of the devotion of

Frenchmen and sailors ; in this most frequented port of France we have had occasion to convince ourselves of the truth of the remark. I can testify that nowhere have I met with a piety, I will not say more modest or more recollected, but certainly more general, frank, and sincere, than in this city.

Heaven seemed to declare in our favor ; for the wind was all that could be desired, and presaged a happy departure on the next day. We returned to our hotel at about five o'clock to complete our final preparations. The confidence expressed at Wittem by good Henry Giesen, that he would not be attacked with sea-sickness, became a firm conviction with him in Paris ; but at Havre it was changed into a simple hope. Henry Hellemans did not consider himself less invincible ; he could not conceive how the sea could possibly inconvenience him. We will see, later on, how these inconceivable ideas were realized.

After supper we had to repair to the vessel to pass the night ; but before leaving the hotel Father Bernard assembled us for the last time, and, with that firmness so well known to you, he said in a decided and penetrating tone : “ My

brothers, we are now going to embark. There is still time. You are free to-day ; to-morrow you will be so no longer. Make your choice, speak candidly ; the moment is decisive, and your decision will be irrevocable."

The event proved that this last trial of our vocation was to be its most striking proof. May our Lord Jesus Christ be for ever blessed for it, and also the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of us all, the hope and the consolation of all true sons of Saint Alphonsus !

It was eight o'clock at night when we arrived at the place where the *Helvetia*, that was to carry us to America, was anchored. We went aboard carrying our valises, in the midst of frightful darkness, and rain which poured down in torrents. At every step we were exposed to the danger of falling into the sea. I could not help thinking of that narrow and ice-covered plank which Saint Francis de Sales was daily obliged to cross to go to Chablais. This was the glorious commencement of that "perfect joy" of which you spoke at Wittem before our setting out. When we arrived the captain was absent. An insolent, uncivilized negro did all in his power to

prevent us from passing the night on board the vessel, and wished to oblige us to return to the hotel, although the night was far advanced and the weather very inclement. At this juncture the boatswain came up, and put an end to the arrogance of the lazy negro, who did not wish to give himself the trouble to prepare our cabins. After some delay the cabins were assigned to us; in each there were two berths, one above the other. On the first night the boards of my berth suddenly gave way, and I fell upon my dear "teacher,"\* who was lying in the lower berth. The next morning we were awakened before sunrise by the noisy sailors, who were running about on deck; and the voices of some women and the cries of children soon informed us that we were not the only persons on board. There were no less than one hundred and thirty emigrants huddled together in the steerage. The greater part of them were Alsatians, natives of Baden or Swabia, all Protestants, and some Swiss Catholics; who, tired of the heavy yoke resting on their unhappy country, went to seek in the New World what one of them most feelingly

\* By "teacher" Father Dold refers to Father Bernard.—TR.

called *die freiste Freiheit*—the most freedom. Besides this motley collection of wretched people, most of whom had lost all sense of shame and self-respect, we also had the horror of being in the company of several of Garibaldi's partisans. They probably intended to execute in a land more adapted to their purposes the black designs which they had been unable to carry out in Rome. We must, however, admit that their very appearance struck terror into our hearts; their hideous countenances bespoke the blackness of their souls. During the voyage they had the boldness to attack with their knives some Frenchmen, who were also steerage passengers; but each time the Garibaldians fell victims to their audacity. We saw two of their number seriously wounded.

In the second class there were only two French families, and two artists from Lombardy, on their way to California to seek their fortunes. The head of one of the families was a professor from Auvergne, who wished to obtain a situation in New York. The other appeared to be either an emerited French gendarme or a member of some sect. He was a type of a Frenchman: short and

plump, well dressed, as touchy as gunpowder, and wore a huge mustache. He appeared to be a man of about forty years of age. He was witty, but lacked judgment; he spoke of everything without knowing anything, and appeared to know everything, whilst it was evident to all that he knew nothing. It might be said that his experience consisted in turning from north to south, and from south to north, like a weathercock. Being wealthy, he thought of going to California, or even to China, to play double or quits. But just at this time he happened to be on his way to New York; and when he arrives in America, he will probably reflect whether it had been expedient for him to leave Europe.

Our little company occupied the first-class cabin, thanks to the solicitude of Father Bernard, who profited of a reduction of twenty-five francs for every missionary to America. There were only two other persons in the first-class, one as singular as the other. One of them was a young American of incredible levity, who had spent several months in Paris to learn dancing. As he could speak only on trivial subjects, he was soon constrained to seek elsewhere for per-

sons, more refined than ourselves, ready to listen to his silly prattle. The other, more whimsical still, was a female of sallow complexion, brazen-faced, and exceedingly playful and noisy in her manners. She was one of Abraham's daughters, and had been married in New York. The passport of Mad. ——— was altogether incorrect, and it was said that she had not even paid for her cabin. She was elegantly dressed, and might have been taken for a Lola Montez had she possessed but a particle of judgment. It is needless to inform you that this sort of society could have been anything but agreeable to us. By some good chance we shortly got rid of her molestations. Our happy ignorance of American etiquette, joined to a want of sympathy for a Jewess of this description, so completely disconcerted her that she resolved to shut herself up in her cabin. After this she appeared in the dining-saloon only on Sundays, and even then she was obliged to sit opposite Father Bernard, and meet his piercing look. We were at length left to ourselves in our *floating convent*. This was one of the few consolations of our tedious voyage.

If to these passengers you add thirty sailors of all nationalities; two negro cooks; a boatswain, a former companion of Father Walworth; a captain, thirty-three years of age, who had crossed all the known seas eighteen times; dog Jack, who soon became Father Kittel's favorite; four rams, two sheep, a dozen turkeys, and twice as many ducks and chickens, you will have the complete number of living beings on board the *Helvetia* when it set sail for New York on Monday, January 27, 1851.

It was six o'clock in the morning when we left the harbor under the patronage of our dearest Mother Mary. The weather was most beautiful and the wind favorable. The Channel was sufficiently agitated to rock our vessel in such a way as to displace the contents of the stomachs of people not accustomed to this kind of sport. We had been at sea scarcely half an hour when the passengers, who had been attracted to the deck to witness the rising of the sun, disappeared one after another. Sea-sickness was now commencing to attack the voyagers, and many were seen running about, paying their tribute to Neptune from every available spot. Our

little Frenchman was excusable, at least this time, for having acted before reflecting. He took refuge in a staircase, over which he leaned, supporting his head and stomach, whilst something differing from words came from beneath his gray mustache. He stared about with a wild look, and his tongue seemed immovable; in a word, he presented a picture of sore distress, and might have been taken for one of those fabulous beings which serve as water-spouts to Gothic churches. Sea-sickness did not spare us. Fathers Hecker and De Landtsheer and the students were the first to set an example not exactly worthy of imitation. Father Giesen especially was several times seen running to the stern of the vessel, and not without reason; you remember he is the one who thought he was strong enough at least to withstand sea-sickness. He was appointed infirmarian, and, although suffering more than the others, he was always on his feet, nursing the sick, watching over those who were still enjoying good health, and at stated times distributed the sweetmeats which he took the precaution to obtain from Father Pilat at Brussels. He performed all of these duties

with a charity and a constancy that greatly edified us during the whole voyage. Father Hecker and the students Wirth, Müller, and Hellemans had the most violent attacks, and suffered almost continually for three whole weeks. Our dear Hellemans was the man of systems, and invented a new one every day. One day the *comfortable* system was his; on the next what he called the *aquatic system* had the preference. The young man had never been sick, and now, finding himself so ill, thought that he was already in a new world, even before arriving in America. Michael Müller had a fixed idea of another kind. The irregular motion of the vessel placed him in great perplexity. He remained seated almost all the while, and whenever he was obliged to rise he was sure to make three attempts before succeeding. At first he would place both of his hands on the chair, looking about in all directions, as if to assure himself that the floor was really firm; he would next extend his legs with great precaution, and at length rise very gravely. When once on his feet, he would venture to make a few steps, keeping his arms stretched out to seize hold of the wall nearest

to him. . . . Father Bernard and myself were not exempt from many little annoyances owing to a situation so foreign to our usual life ; but by means of a little less simplicity and greater ingenuity we were able to dissemble our grievances. The *naïveté* of these two *fratres* on many occasions furnished us with subjects for innocent jokes.

With all this we were continually advancing, and at about ten o'clock were on the high sea. The steamer which had taken us in tow up to this time left us to return to Havre. The sailors, who until then appeared very drowsy, acquired fresh vigor as soon as the management of the vessel was left to them. They unfurled the sails, singing a *hymn* with which they begin, continue, and end their voyages. It was heard at all times, whether prosperous or adverse, and began with this *sublime* sentiment: Whiskey is the life of men. A sailor never performs any part of his work without singing, or rather howling in a savage manner, similar to the unearthly yells we used to hear in the environs of Wittem during harvest-time. We were under full sail, and had been making

rapid progress for more than seven hours, and the sun had just been hid from view by a thin fog, when the captain informed us that we would probably experience a heavy gale on the following night. You may well imagine that this news was not calculated to awaken any particular joy in the hearts of inexperienced navigators, who hoped, perhaps, like myself, to cross the ocean without encountering any storm. Fortunately, the captain proved to be a false prophet. The shades of night enveloped us in their dark mantles, but for most of us it was a sleepless night. A magnificent sunrise greeted our rising next morning. The fury of the wind, the visible swelling of the sea, the agitated, snow-capped billows, the sky, covered with rapidly-sailing clouds that were reflected in the water, appeared as so many forerunners of the frightful storm we were soon to encounter. It was one o'clock (January 28) when the dark and menacing tempest suddenly appeared on the horizon; a dull but constantly increasing noise, that beggars all description, announced its swift approach. The surface of the watery plain be-

came as black as ebony, furrowed by long strings of white foam, and seemed to take part in the general mourning of nature. The tempest burst upon us before we had time to take the necessary precautions. All the sails were still spread; the captain and sailors were not prepared in the least. But what activity, energy, and intrepidity do not these men, who apparently are in a constant state of insensibility, exhibit at the moment of a storm! They throw themselves out of their hammocks, scale the rigging, climb to the tops of the masts, stand on a simple rope at a height of more than sixty feet above the watery abyss, and exposed to all the fury of the tempest, with a hardihood that must terrify any one who watches their movements. . . . The rain fell in torrents. The low, hollow sound of the sea was changed into a roaring and a thundering far more terrible than the most violent storm on land. The surging billows rose to the height of mountains, and bore along with them to this giddy height our helpless vessel, only to throw it from their summits into deep valleys of water, as if to immerge it in the abyss. True

it is that there is nothing more wonderful and sublime than this rising of the sea—*Mirabiles elationes maris*—but, at the same time, there is nothing more terrific. I can assure you that I could not conceal a sense of terror; and if I remained on deck, it was not courage that kept me there, but the fear of going down into my cabin, where all the horrors of darkness were added to the fury of the tempest. In the interior of the vessel the death-like silence was broken only by the roaring of the sea, the awful shocks caused by the rolling of the waves, the cracking of the rudder, masts, and sail-yards. This first toss was not to be the last; it was simply the prelude of what awaited us. After four hours of fruitless fury calm was restored, or rather the storm did not rage with the same violence; but we had now to combat unceasingly against a furious west wind which was as bad as a storm. We were barely out of danger when the Jewess began to play on her harmonica, and the little Frenchman, like a nightingale after a thunderstorm, warbled a joyous melody. German and French airs were heard from all parts of the *entrepont*, whilst we sang the *Laudate Dominum*

and the *Ave maris Stella*. Such is man. As soon as he thinks himself out of the reach of danger he seems already to have forgotten it, and abandons himself to joy. But by this unchecked gladness his inmost thoughts and hopes are made manifest.

The following night was a very tempestuous one; the tossing and rolling of the ship affected some of us in an unpleasant way. Early in the morning I was attacked by sea-sickness; and during the day all the others who had withstood the first attack underwent the same fate, not even excepting Father Bernard. Father Kittel, who generally promenaded on deck in company with dog Jack to enjoy the sea-breeze, was invincible for a long time. But on the seventh day he too was obliged to *surrender*. The tacking of the ship became more and more difficult. Having been driven back by a strong wind from the southwest, all we could do was to ply to the windward. We had to change sail every moment to avoid being driven upon the coasts of France or England, equally distant from us. On the 30th, at nine A.M., we found ourselves exactly in the same place as the even-

ing previous, although we had been sailing all night. At one time the captain thought of returning to port. This was also the wish of the passengers, who feared, with just reason, that the sailors, exhausted by so much useless labor, would refuse to perform their duty. But he was obstinately bent on pursuing the voyage, and tried to persuade himself that a wind so violent could not be of long duration. He soon had reason to repent of his obstinacy. At six P.M. we were suddenly assailed by another squall. The waves and hail fell upon the deck with incredible impetuosity: the sea not only roared, but shrieked and howled. We were still ten miles off the coast of England, but in the twinkling of an eye we were thrown upon it. We were now fluctuating between life and death; this was clear to every one. The vessel was irresistibly driven towards the famous cape of Beachy Head, the remembrance of which shall never be effaced from my mind. At this place there is only one fathom and a half of water (our vessel required three), and the shore is extremely dangerous on account of the rocks, which are on a level with the water. The

wind was carrying us directly towards these frightful shoals. We were at table when the captain, hastily passing us, said: "Eat well!" Father Walworth caught his meaning. He wished to say: It will, perhaps, be your last meal. At every moment our situation became more perilous. Fires of distress were lighted on deck, but no answer was returned. The sailors ran about the vessel with dismal torches, which contrasted greatly with the frightful darkness; but they were extinguished by the wind almost immediately, and left us in the dark. At about nine o'clock we stood around Father Bernard at the foot of the main-mast. He told the novices De Landtsheer and Wirth to come to him at the critical moment to pronounce their vows; and after having exhorted all of us to resign ourselves entirely to the will of God, under whose protection we were, he told us to seek some repose, promising that he himself would warn us of any danger in due time. In vain did I attempt to obey; for sleep was unwilling to close my eyes. It seems to me that I never in all my life prayed with so much faith and fervor. Fatigue at length as-

served its right, and after having recommended to my Guardian Angel the plank I might seize hold of in case of shipwreck, I fell asleep in the arms of Providence, whose watchful eye is ever resting on the poor missionary. *Oculi ejus in pauperem respiciunt.*

On the following morning, thanks to the protection of our good Mother Mary, whom I invoked without ceasing, we were out of danger. The sea was still in a state of violent commotion, and the wind seemed to subside for some moments, only to begin with redoubled fury. We had lost two sails; the rudder had been damaged considerably, but still the captain persisted in carrying on the struggle. It was only on the 31st of January, at three P.M., that, finding all resistance useless, he decided to make for the nearest port. The storm had driven us beyond Dover, and at about six P.M. we cast anchor in the Downs, two miles from the little city of Deal, distant some leagues from Canterbury. More than eighty vessels had also sought shelter there from the storm. You undoubtedly suppose that, after so disastrous a trial of navigation, we were very glad to be able to take some repose.

We were in sight of the ancient Isle of Saints, to-day a sad kingdom of error. But there, too, we had brothers, and this thought was sufficient to make us bless the hand that had led us to this coast. While awaiting favorable wind Father Bernard went to Clapham to surprise Father de Held and our other confrères with a visit. He accordingly left for London, February 1, at nine A.M., in company with our young captain. In the meantime we were preparing to celebrate a double feast next day—the Feast of the Purification. Before leaving Father Bernard had made arrangements to procure us the consolation of offering the Holy Sacrifice at Deal. But, unhappily, our desires could not be fulfilled. At ten o'clock the wind became favorable, and only one hour later we saw the numerous vessels leaving the harbor. We were the only ones yet remaining in the bay, and impatiently awaited the return of the *chieftain*. He arrived at eleven P.M., with Father Bernard, who had been only as far as London. On February 3, at ten A.M., the anchor was raised, and we went out to sea, not to leave it before our arrival in America. The *Helvetia* was going along

under full sail, favored by an east wind, but only for a short time. It seemed as if heaven desired to give us an occasion of experiencing all the amenities that may be met with on the ocean. After having witnessed the grand spectacle of a storm at sea, we were also to enjoy all the annoyance of perfect calm. Scarcely were we out of sight of land when the sea became as smooth as ice. In the evening the last rays of the sun, which was just sinking behind a blue-tinted cloud bordered with brilliant lines of purple hue, presented to our eyes one of the most enchanting views that the ocean can offer.

The luminous globe slowly sank into the glittering waves; it gilt once more the tops of our masts, and then disappeared. The night was as calm as the day had been; a slight but insufficient breeze continually moved the sails, but was unable to fill them. Early next morning I hurried on deck to contemplate the rising of the sun. I thought of you, my dear brothers, when the dazzling brightness of the east met my expectant gaze; I would have wished you to be with me, in order to behold the wonderful work

of Him who will one day be our mutual recompense. In vain would I attempt to convey an idea of this magnificent spectacle. The illumined horizon ; that immense ball of fire, which seems to rise from the bosom of the sea ; those numberless, luminous rays that suddenly light up the vast expanse of the heavens ; and, above all, that long train of light reflected in the mirror of the waters, beginning at one extremity of the ocean and ending only at the ship, are so many things which my feeble pen would vainly attempt to describe. The sight of them produces in the soul an impression of grandeur which would satiate it, if ever created beauty were able to do it. The shining disc of the star of day naturally reminded me of its all-powerful Creator and of the Divine Sun of Justice. The absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, so sensibly felt at sea, was the subject of my morning meditation . . .

The calm was partly welcome to us, inasmuch as it enabled us to carry out the order of the daily exercises. Meditation, prayer, study, and pious conversations about Wittem, America, and Europe, divided the time left us by the whims of the ocean. During the day I was engaged with

the treatise *De Jure et Justitia*, and at six in the evening I was present at the English class, which was given in the middle of the vessel, by the faint light of a philosophical lamp, and often to the great hilarity of the officers, who heard us murdering their mother-tongue. . . .

We left the English Channel under full sail, and for the last time cast our looks on the coasts of England and Europe. We were now floating over the abyss where the sounding-lead no longer finds bottom. . . . Several days of quiet sailing seemed to give promise of a prosperous voyage. Alas ! we were soon undeceived. On the 15th of February, at two P.M., we were assailed by a storm not less furious, if not quite so dangerous, than the other two. It came on from the south, and suddenly plunged us into darkness. The wind blew with such violence that it threatened to carry away our masts ; it lashed the waves into foam, and changed them into a heavy rain, and furiously drove them on like so many rolling mountains. But the most sublime moment of the tempest is when, having reached its greatest degree of rage, it ceases suddenly, as if God placed his finger on its

mouth : *Spiritus procellarum quæ faciunt verbum ejus*. We have not yet witnessed this grand moment. Thereupon there ensues an admirable alternation of restlessness and calm, of agitation and peace. Nature seems to breath anew. The sea no longer foams, the sails flap languidly, and the vessel is helplessly borne along by the waves. . . . The next morning daylight reappeared, and with it the sun. At about nine o'clock Father Kittle and myself were walking on deck, when all at once we saw issuing from the hatchway that leads to the deck a scarlet-colored *semi-circumference*, intersected by a blue *radius*. It was our little Frenchman wearing a red cap, and to which was attached a blue tassel. He had risen much earlier than usual, and probably even before having taken the soup which he regularly ordered to be brought to his bed. At his approach we placed ourselves in a state of observation, anxious to witness the issue of this early apparition; it could certainly be nothing less than dramatic. And in fact he had not even reached the head of the stairs and had barely had time to rub his eyes, before he darted down-stairs like a flash of lightning, and

with all the power of his lungs called upon his wife to come and behold the rising of the sun. "C'est magnifique, c'est sublime!" said he, continually ascending and descending the stairs; "venez donc voir, c'est adorable!" He could not be accused of having spoken before reflecting, because he had simply spoken before having seen. The king of the day had emerged from the regions of Aurora more than two hours before.

On the 19th, at midnight, a strong wind sprang up in the northwest, and favored our course. We made no less than ten or twelve knots an hour. Eight days of this kind of wind would have carried us to New York. This transitory moment of gladness awakened within us a spirit of conjecture. Father Kittel would sing High Mass in New York on the 2d of March. I chose the 5th, Ash-Wednesday. Father Bernard had declared in Paris that it would not take place before the Feast of Saint Joseph, and Father Giesen for the 25th. The votes of the others were uncertain. Father Bernard was pleased to repeat these words of Jonas: *Adhuc quadraginta dies*; but Father Müller ingenuously replied,

*Abbreviabuntur propter electos.* It will be seen in the sequel which of us possessed most of the prophetic spirit. Unfortunately, the hope of a more prosperous voyage was once more to vanish. Even on the very next day those who had entertained the brightest hopes were forced to relinquish them. The wind had died out, and the calm brought with it a numerous and pleasant company in the midst of the ocean. More than fifty porpoises surrounded our vessel and indulged in their sports. When they plunged into the water, a fin was visible on their large backs, which was similar to a triangular sail. But this time we were not amused by the little Frenchman; the professor from Auvergne, who had broken off friendship with his messmate, and now cooked for himself, took his place. He was a man of extreme good-nature. His kind heart impelled him to look for some crumbs of biscuit wherewith to feed those greedy monsters. It is generally said that their appearance is a sign of bad weather; they, however, brought us a good south wind, and towards evening, when our sails began to fill, they followed the vessel for some time, as if to serve as our guard of honor.

On the 22d a furious west wind opened another period of our voyage not less disastrous than that of the British Channel. The only difference consisted in not being exposed to the danger of being driven on the shoals. One squall succeeded the other, and during eight days of painful navigation we barely advanced one day's voyage. These were perhaps the most calamitous days of our voyage. But the rocking of the ship was not as prejudicial to us as it had been before. We began to become accustomed to a seafaring life, and, after thirty days, the nauseous malady had disappeared almost entirely. We laughed about it just as men laugh at past dangers that are no longer to be dreaded. On the 1st of March, although the wind had subsided somewhat, the rain still prevented us from walking on a deck of 168 feet in length and 28 in width.

For the first time since our departure from the Downs we had fair wind, and the following day, March 2, being the Sunday preceding Ash-Wednesday, we had passed over one-half of our course. It was just the day upon which Father Kittel had promised himself the happiness of singing

High Mass in New York. But if it was not allowed us to celebrate the Holy Mysteries on “the day that the Lord hath made,” pious and consoling recollections were inscribed on our memories in a very particular manner. We remembered that at the dawn of this very Sunday the Most Blessed Sacrament was exposed at Wittem to appease the anger of God during these days of riotous amusements; and, being occupied with this thought, we united ourselves in spirit to the fervent adoration of our confrères. Our spirits were in your spirits, our hearts in your hearts. We received Holy Communion, we celebrated Mass, in union with you; we took our turn together with you to prostrate ourselves at the feet of our Sweet Jesus. Oh! how lovely is the bond of charity, how sweet it becomes, how consoling, when it unites hearts in Jesus Christ, even beyond the seas! The more it is extended, the more is it strengthened and purified. Yes, my brothers, my dearly-beloved brothers, if I am unable to restrain my tears in tracing these lines, it is because, if ever I loved you, I love you to-day more than ever, and it is to Jesus I owe the happiness of loving you in him.

I would wish to finish here the narration of the transitory things of this life, to converse with you on the infinite amiableness of our sweet Saviour Jesus, who procures for us this inestimable blessing of loving one another in him, were it not that the sweet duty of charity is not incompatible with the thought of Jesus Christ. I will, therefore, continue for the love of him and of you. In the evening of this sacred day the north wind offered us the spectacle of an *aurora borealis*; but, to our great regret, it was not sufficiently distinct. The two succeeding days were days of still more fervent and assiduous prayer at Wittem. They were also the two happiest days we spent at sea. The wind, beautiful weather, the sea, all prospered our course on these days of benediction.

While (on Ash-Wednesday) these different events sweetened the annoyance of the calm, a gust of wind that had by degrees sprung up in the north drove us from the deck; and on the following morning we experienced the heaviest storm to which we had as yet been exposed. When a tempest comes from the north, it rages with perfect madness. The waves no longer

rise ; they are stretched out like a vast plain, and bend under the gusts of wind that weigh on them. The sea appears oppressed ; it moans under the lashes of the icy, northern blasts, and in its impotent frenzy manifests its rage by thick foam, which covers it throughout its entire extent. The vessel shudders and trembles on the disturbed waters like a child under the hand of a furious master. Only two sails were left, and of these the main-sail was already rent, or rather cut in two from top to bottom. The sailors are much to be pitied during such frightful weather. Besides the bitter frost, which benumbs their limbs, the sails, the rigging, the ship's ladders, are all covered with ice, and consequently become entirely unmanageable. At four o'clock in the afternoon the storm had almost subsided, but it was followed by extremely cold weather, which continued for more than eight days. This new but unwelcome guest was also to be added to our maritime miseries ; the increase of our wants also increased the occasions for Father Giesen to exercise the zeal of his active charity. We could not succeed in lighting a fire ; the stove smoked continually. Seeing us in this predicament,

good Father Giesen brought out all the resources of his inventive mind in order to succeed; and after a thousand physical, chemical, and atmospheric experiments, he succeeded so well that Father Bernard engaged him to write a treatise on the manner of lighting a fire. It matters very little how, but at last we had a warm stove. We all laughed; but then, too, we all warmed ourselves.

After the frost, snow, rain, and hail; after calm, rocks, and storms, we thought we had well-nigh emptied the cup of marine vicissitudes. We were now only about six hundred miles from New York, and drawing near the sand-banks that border on the shores of America. We were confident of arriving there soon without encountering further dangers. But once more did we vainly flatter ourselves with deceitful hopes. An enemy far more formidable than the coasts of England awaited us: on the morning of the seventh we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of icebergs. It was a thing unheard of at this season of the year; they are never seen in these latitudes except in the months of May and June. The idea which I had formed of these gigantic

masses was far below the reality. The first iceberg we perceived appeared like a formidable giant, although it was distant from us more than six geographical miles. The dazzling whiteness of its rugged summit was reflected in a beautiful manner on the azure background of the horizon. It rose to a height of more than eighty feet above the water, and its base was more than one hundred and twenty feet in diameter; it might have been called a church of enormous size. The jagged sides of these floating mountains are sometimes furrowed by narrow but very deep fissures, similar to a rock cleft asunder by a thunderbolt. The rays of the sun are doubly magnificent when reflected in a mirror of this sort. However, these beautiful children of the north, wonderful though they be, were rather uncomfortable neighbors, and might at any moment become disastrous to us. In a short time we saw ourselves surrounded by them, and were forced to depart from our desirable course for more than four hours. This tacking of the ship extricated us from the danger for the moment; but on the next day we came up with icebergs still more numerous than those of the evening

previous. But the finger of God, who protected us, had marked out for them the bounds which they were not to overstep. An opening was left in the middle, and we were enabled to continue our route until late at night without any notable accident. On the ninth of March we were out of their reach. In passing the shores of Newfoundland, which are near the American coast, we saw a large flock of marine ducks, that plunged into the water with remarkable dexterity, and reappeared only after twenty or thirty minutes.

A large flock of European swallows, which had escorted the vessel until the 1st of March, was now replaced by a legion of American swallows.

We were advancing continually; but from the time we left the icebergs the change in the temperature was truly singular. Such a strange alternation of good and bad weather took place every instant that we could no more rely on fair wind whenever we had it than despair whenever it was unfavorable. The sailors, and above all the naval officers, whose superstition or impiety increases in proportion to their good or ill success, could not help attributing

all the difficulties and misfortunes of the voyage to our presence on the vessel. It is a generally-accepted proverb among sailors that the presence of priests and women always proves disadvantageous to their voyages. And, in fact, the young American of whom I spoke in the beginning informed us of this on the very first day. "We will have a bad voyage," he said to us, without intending the compliment; "we will have a long and perilous voyage, because the devil will set heaven and the ocean in motion in order to prevent us from arriving in due time." Father de Landtsheer, moreover, assured us that this conviction is so strong in the minds of Englishmen that, for this reason alone, they often refuse to take Catholic priests on board. We did not require this assurance, because what passed under our own eyes was a convincing proof of the fact. The second mate asserted that there was a Jonas on the vessel, who ought to be thrown overboard. The boatswain himself went still further, and with a mien partly jocose, partly serious, said that this Jonas could be none other than that big, merry fellow who walked

to and fro on deck during the night like a ghost. This was no one else than good Father Giesen—the scape-goat of Israel amongst us, Jonas among the sailors! The boatswain also affirmed that whenever Father Giesen looked at the compass, the wind was changed, however fair it might be at the time. He was so firmly convinced of this that he actually hid the needle in order to conceal it from the gaze of *Jonas*. How much must not be believed if a man does not wish to believe what ought to be believed! Notwithstanding his superstition, this good man was not indifferent in matters of religion. He sought for the truth in all sincerity; he conversed several times with Father Hecker, who left him in a fair way of being converted to the Catholic faith. But although *Jonas* no longer looked at the compass, the state of affairs remained unchanged. At length, on the 15th, the wind blew steadily from the northeast. It gently wafted us towards the west, when, at ten A.M., we perceived, at a distance of more than four miles, an English vessel sailing in the same direction. She reached us at four in the afternoon.

All the passengers thronged to the deck. It was generally thought that she came to ask for provisions; but all were deceived. The captain of the vessel and his discouraged sailors simply sought the consolation of communicating to their brother sailors their reverses and misfortunes. They had left London on the 21st of December, bound for Boston, and it was already the eighty-fourth day they were sailing about on the ocean, which was stormy all of this time. The news of such a disaster was unquestionably calculated to console us, and caused us to render fervent thanks to God for the special protection with which he had favored us. I may be excused for remarking *en passant* that this vessel had neither priests nor women on board; she was a merchant ship.

. . . After this interview, which was sad and at the same time cheering, we retired to our *convent* with more courage and hope, but it would seem that heaven had granted us this respite only to prepare us for another trial. The next morning, at four o'clock, a storm burst upon our heads, and the lightning rent the sky. Happily, it was not of long duration.

The gathering clouds were quickly dispersed, and a heavy rain restored peace to nature. On the same day, at eleven P.M., a second storm, as *pacific* as the first, arose, and was dispelled in the same way. Time passed on; we made scarcely any progress, and the store of provisions was fast being consumed. Several emigrant families had exhausted their stock eight days before; the sailors were in want of tobacco, their second soul after whiskey; it was a long time since we last saw any fruit; the supply of sugar failed; and on the 16th we were told that there was no more butter. There was only a small quantity of meat left, and we were still more than four hundred miles from New York. With all this, the Feast of Saint Joseph was at hand; the wind was sluggish, and it is said that even the best sailing vessel never makes more than twelve knots an hour. A kind of miracle was required to bring us to port by Wednesday. Our confidence was entirely gone, when, contrary to all expectation, a fair wind sprang up on the night of the 16th. On the 17th we were sailing at the rate of nine or ten knots an hour. If the wind would

be steady for twenty-four hours more we would land in New York at the end of that time. We did not dare to raise our hopes to such a height, because past experience had taught us to be more moderate in our expectations. But our holy Protector had taken our cause into his hands. On the 18th the wind became so violent that it was found necessary to furl the sails. It was feared that we would arrive too soon, and the captain dreaded to enter the harbor at night. But all his efforts to slacken the impetuous course of the ship were unavailing; and with only one half-sail we progressed more rapidly than we did before with sixteen or eighteen sail spread. On the morning of the 19th the fair wind had died out; but we now beheld the shores and the mountains of the New World, lit up in the distance by the first rays of the rising sun. At the sight of this blessed land, to which we had been anxiously looking forward for fifty-two days, for the sake of which we had undergone all the dangers of the sea, an unspeakable feeling of gratitude and joy took possession of our hearts. We were near the end of what is called

the great sacrifice, the prelude of so many others, that will be much longer, more painful, but at the same time more meritorious; and in the strength which God gave us to make the first we discerned a certain pledge of the succor which he will not fail to give us to accomplish the other sacrifices. Such are the ways of the God of mercy and of love towards men. He lowers himself to such a degree as to ask their consent, and then does all himself.

Everything was propitious to us on the day chosen by Saint Joseph to lead us into port. The weather was magnificent; the sun, the clouds, the azure sky, never appeared to me so beautiful in Europe. We spent almost the entire day on deck, in order to contemplate at leisure, or rather to devour with our eyes, the shores, smiling with the verdure of spring, and the hills, covered from base to summit with dense forests. We were gently moving towards New York, when the falling shades of night compelled us to cast anchor at the entrance to the harbor.

At dawn of the following day the anchor was weighed; all the sails were spread, and under a serene sky we entered the immense basin called

the Lower Bay. By one o'clock we arrived at the interior harbor. Here the wind opposed our course, and we were once more obliged to cast anchor to await the coming of a tug-boat. This circumstance caused a kind of revolt to break out among the emigrants. They longed to be in New York, and sought an occasion for mutiny under pretext of the want of provisions. They even signed a paper, by which they pledged themselves to throw the captain overboard, for having refused to accept the services of a tug early in the morning. The Garibaldians were at the head of the plot, and were agreed among themselves that all the curés of the first cabin should be added to the list of their intended victims. More than fifty of the mutineers had collected on the deck, awaiting the captain, when the boatswain came up to them. He ordered them to retire; instead of replying, they seized him by the throat, and would have thrown him into the sea, if his truly herculean strength and vigorous courage had not delivered him from their grasp. He seized a pulley lying close at hand, and with the first blow caused the blood of a Swiss who had attacked him to gush forth.

Upon seeing this the rest of the cowardly band beat a precipitate retreat. A steamer, which came to take us in tow, re-established peace and order. Under the rays of a most beautiful sun, at two o'clock, we entered the interior harbor. But here, my brothers, I invite those of you who would wish to form an idea of this magnificent panorama to come and behold with your own eyes. It is impossible to describe the three great cities, the numberless and crowded houses of which adorn the three eminences formed by two large rivers, down to the border of the sea. The two rivers themselves, that might be taken for floating forests, surpass all conception, and present a picture of activity and industry which my feeble pen would in vain attempt to sketch. At four o'clock we arrived at Quarantine, where the physician who inspected the vessel informed us of the arrival of two of our confrères, Father Joseph Müller, Rector at New York, and Father Minister. They were transported with greater joy at seeing us than we at our safe arrival; they had given us up for lost. All the vessels that had left from Havre eight, ten, and even fifteen days after us had been already in the

harbor, and the *Helvetia* had not made her appearance! The good fathers were in dread lest another evil had befallen us, not less fatal than shipwreck—that is, typhoid fever. Only a few days before this terrible disease suddenly broke out among the passengers of an English vessel that had sailed from Liverpool. Calamities of this kind were well calculated to convince us of the special protection with which God had favored us during our tedious voyage. Father Bernard did not cease to repeat that, considering the rough season, our voyage had been a prosperous, nay, a very prosperous, one. Now, my brothers, having asked you to pray for us, we also beg you to say a prayer of thanksgiving, in order to aid us to liquidate our debts to God. . . . Just as we were leaving Quarantine we saw a small steamer apparently coming towards us. It soon reached us; there were on it our old friend McMaster and the two brothers of Father Hecker, who, having received intelligence by telegraph of our arrival, had engaged a steamer to accompany us. At length we reached the end of our pilgrimage. At half-past five o'clock in the evening we disembarked,

and Providence decreed that, without my knowledge, I should be the first to place my foot on American soil. We joyfully quitted the *Helvetia*, which, like ourselves, had now crossed the Atlantic for the first time. May it please God frequently to people with evangelical laborers the little rooms which we were the first to occupy, and converted by us, so to speak, into so many little cloisters! May the image of our good Mother Mary which we placed on the wall frequently receive the homage of the hearts whom she will have engaged to devote themselves to the salvation of abandoned souls! We had to pass through almost the entire length of New York before arriving at the convent of our fathers. Let it suffice for me to tell you the observance which I have found here far exceeded my most sanguine expectations. The community of New York is a little Wittem in point of regularity. I will say nothing of the piety of Americans, since I have not as yet been able to become acquainted with it; but yesterday the church was filled almost entirely in the morning, and entirely so at the evening sermon. The concourse of people

greatly affected me, and, being penetrated with a lively sentiment of gratitude for my precious vocation, I cannot refrain from exclaiming with the holy King David: *Funes ceciderunt mihi in praeclaris; etenim haereditas mea praeclara est mihi!* . . . We remain here at present, awaiting our destination. Father Bernard will leave this evening for Baltimore, and take with him the two novices and Father Stiessberger. Father Hecker will probably remain in New York; it is believed that the house of studies will be in Cumberland.

Such, my dear brothers in Jesus Christ, are the lines dictated to me by charity, which your kindness will have the patience to read. It is not necessary for me to crave your indulgence for the style of a letter written at sea, and oftentimes during the storms. I must reserve my excuses for an object more worthy of my regrets and your indulgent charity. I profit by this first occasion to ask of all my confrères in general, and of my venerated superiors in particular, pardon for the frequent failings of which I was guilty towards them during the seven years in which I enjoyed their inappreciable favors. I

thank each and every one of them from the bottom of my heart. I thank you most especially, Rev. Father Rector and Father Prefect, for the unceasing care you took of my own poor self. . . . If, then, my dearest brothers, whom I embrace at this moment, after having received so many favors at Wittem, I am still permitted to ask for more, ask of Jesus and of Mary, for myself and my companions, that we may never be of the number of those unfortunate ones who, after having crossed the seas, labor much, but neglect themselves, and at the hour of death find their hands void of virtues and merits.

Feeling assured that you will not refuse this petition of charity, I remain for ever, Very Reverend Father and dear confrères in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Alphonsus, your most affectionate and devoted servant and brother,

L. M. DOLD, C.SS.R.

DEAR FATHER RECTOR: As you see from the enclosed letter, our young men are at the height of joy. I alone prove an exception. Scarcely had I landed when a letter was handed to me,

announcing the death of my good mother, which took place on the third day after my departure from Havre, at the precise moment when my own life was endangered. Imagine my feelings. . . . Well, God has willed it. I adore his holy will, and bow to it in silence. I beg your reverence not to forget this beloved mother, and to recommend her soul to the pious remembrances of your community. She was truly a benefactress of our Congregation. Adieu, dear father. Pray for your devoted

FATHER BERNARD.

NEW YORK, March 22, 1851.



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